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CONCERNING THE SOUL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Fourth Impression

THE HIDDEN ROMANCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Fifth Impression

THE SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE OF JESUS

THE BRUCE LECTURES 1917

With Introduction by

PROF. JAMES MOFFATT, D.D.

CONCERNING THE SOUL

BY

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"I THINK NOBLY OF THE SOUL"

Twelfth Night, Act IV., Scene 2

PREFACE

THESE chapters were first written as addresses, and delivered from time to time before some of the congregations to which it was the writer's privilege to minister. Though together they form a kind of connected exposition of the subject, they make no claim to originality, or to exhaustiveness in their treatment. They merely suggest the main arguments. They are here offered in printed form in response to many requests from friends in Forfar, Edinburgh and Ballater, that they might be made thus accessible. In order that they might perhaps recall the spoken word to some of these friends, little attempt has been made to take them out of their work-a-day pulpit garb, or to sharpen the crude half-suggestions which some of the figures employed convey. Illustrations and quotations have been gathered from many sources, sometimes from books, sometimes from literature of a more ephemeral kind. Some of these have become part of the equipment of the writer's own memory, and sometimes phrases, sometimes even sentences, may appear, which ought, if it had been possible, to have had at least the acknowledgment which quotation marks convey. In other cases, they have been

transcribed from note-books where, unfortunately, no reference to the source was made. And since on the printed page quotation marks are as effective as the vague " it has been said," such phrases have been cut out, where, ordinarily, one would have wished to name the book or author.

The reprinted poem is a joint production—a result of the most blessed human fellowship which the present writer enjoys.

There may be others besides the friends for whom these chapters were first prepared, to whom they may prove to be of some help in the endless warfare which religion has to wage on the earth against " the spirit that denies." The mind and life of Jesus form their viewpoint and their goal. The task which He set before Himself may in one sense be described as that of proclaiming that the human soul is the greatest of earthly realities, a thing of infinite significance, of eternal value, indeed, in the eyes of God. He staked His life on that conviction. And this fact is our justification for the setting forth of this vital truth in a few of its many facets.

J.A.R.

Aberdeen,
September, 1921

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I

Is there a Soul?

"Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—GEN. i. 2.

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."—GEN. ii. 7.

"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."—JOB xxxiii. 4.

Is there a soul? It is a somewhat disconcerting question to place in the forefront. And it is necessary to say at once, that during the whole course of these chapters we shall be engaged upon the answer. Our present concern is with the broader question: Is there anything else in the world except dead matter moved by blind unconscious forces?

Now this is not a modern question. It is as old as the Bible, old as human life itself. Open that strange book of Ecclesiastes almost anywhere, and you will find the writer repeating in endless ways this opinion: "That which

befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." The voice of grey and sombre disillusionment—of materialistic scepticism—never expressed itself more thoroughly than this. The writer is not an atheist. And doubtless the words contain a great and solemn truth. But our point here is that you do not need to go outside the pages of the Bible in order to listen to the voice of cosmic materialism. The Bible, which gives expression to every vagary of the human heart, is the most free-thinking book in the world.

Over against that voice, however, there is another and more persistent voice in the Bible. It is the voice which says that behind the material world there is an Infinite Spirit. Among the earliest words in Genesis, spirit is given priority over matter: "Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—And "in man there is a spirit." God did not

make him as "the beasts that perish." He was made in the very "image of God": "a little lower than the angels." "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." Or, to quote the voice of young enthusiasm, justifying itself before sad experience: "It is a spirit in man and breath of the Almighty that giveth him understanding." . . . "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."—And man shall not all die. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades."

But in between these two convictions you will find a third in the Bible. It is not the voice of grim, dogmatic materialism; and not the voice of triumphant faith. It is a questioning cry—a cry that sometimes leans to despair, sometimes to hope. "What is man," cries the suffering Job, "that Thou shouldst magnify him?" Or, as another religious poet of the Old Testament expresses it, with a little more hopefulness and a little less bitterness: "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast

ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

In that questioning cry the secret of the trouble lies revealed. It is because man is constantly face to face with the material universe, vast and cold: its boundless oceans, hungry and cruel; its tremendous mountains and deserts, silent and dreadful; the wide empty spaces of the sky—

> "The august, inhospitable and inhuman night,
> Glittering magnificently unperturbed"—

that he is constrained to ask this question. Great Nature terrifies the soul of man. It refuses to speak to him. It sometimes seems to look at him with wolfish eyes, as if it resented his intrusion on its surface—as if it were eager to obliterate him, to hide him away in its dusty breast again. He seems so small, so puny and insignificant. What right has he to dare to imagine that there is anything in him that can claim pre-eminence over this mighty material universe, far less aspire to kinship with the Creator? It is from that brute tyranny of the outer world over the mind of man that all the materialism of all the centuries has come.

What answer has the soul to this perplexity? I remember resting with a friend in one of the glacier valleys of the Alps beneath the stupendous, snow-white cone of the Schreckhorn; tiny little, palpitating specks of human dust were we, that had ventured to alight upon the skirts of the Divine Majesty. We sat beside some blue forget-me-nots, fair offspring of summer's long-drawn kiss on winter's niggard breast. A sudden sound broke through that mountain-circled silence. It was the roar of an avalanche, tons of loosened ice-blocks pouring over the wet, black, glistening rock-face, on the far side of the valley. Death and innocence mingled there. After a pause I heard the voice of my friend, subdued to child-like wistfulness, asking: "Do you think that puny man can really be of more importance than the Schreckhorn?" A remembered word of Pascal gave the answer: "Man is only a reed, the weakest reed in Nature; but he is a thinking reed. It needs no universe, but only a vapour or a drop of water to kill him; but when the dead universe crushes him, man is still more noble than that which kills him, because he knows

that he dies, while, of the advantage which the universe has over him, it knows nothing."

This is the first part of the soul's answer to the materialistic challenge. The very thought of immensity which terrifies us is a thought of our own conceiving. The mind of man, apparently occupying but a little corner of the world, can yet reach out and out to comprehend something of the world's vastness. The waste of stars cannot say *I know*; but man can say it. Yes, there is a spirit in man which is somehow greater than the dust from which he came.

The materialist is ready with his objection. "Your boasted power to think," he says, "is only a vain delusion: it is the brain that knows, and all the teeming life of the brain can be explained away in terms of dead matter and motion. And there is one great law of nature which is the unshakable pillar upon which the whole vast edifice of modern science rests. It is the law which declares that the quantity of energy which is available in the world is constant in its amount, and can neither be added to nor taken away from by so much as a single throb.

Consciousness, the capacity to know, is just a kind of vapour given off by the physical forces, which pulse through the brain. It is related to the brain as the music is to the harpstrings—a relationship of entire dependence. The creation of this strange thing, thought, has not robbed the great material machine of a single particle of force, and it cannot interfere to add a single impulse to the moving of its mighty wheels." This great law, as he conceives it, is like the magic circle of some diabolic wizard, which nothing that is immaterial can penetrate. Consciousness is a kind of window, through which we can only gaze out helplessly at all that happens in the world.

What shall we say to the scientific materialist who thus confronts us with his mighty law? We have three questions to ask him.

The first is this: If consciousness is such a useless, helpless thing, a mere onlooker at all that happens in the world, do you mean to tell us that, if it were switched off altogether, all the history of the world would have taken place just as though it had never been? That men would have loved and hated, spoken,

written, painted, fabricated wonderful symphonies of music and of song; that the same empires would have risen and fallen, the same wars been fought and lost and won? That mankind, in fact, would have spun the long story of the world, even had the race remained unconscious, a myriad welter of blind, mechanical puppets jostling each other in the dark? That is too great a nightmare to ask us to believe.

The second question is this: You say that all human life and all mental activity have no other explanation behind them save a vast sum of physical forces changing and changing again into ever fresh combinations. Are we, then, to believe that the mind of Shakespeare, with all its teeming world of splendid and lovely thought, is merely the result of the accidental jostling together of multitudes of dead atoms? If we possessed a few millions of little squares of cardboard, each containing a letter of the alphabet, should we, by mixing and mixing even for millions of years, be able to pour them out at length in the exact order of the letters in the play of *Hamlet*, or in the prophecies of Isaiah, or in the Sermon on the Mount?

That, we submit, is imposing too great a burden on our credulity.

Our third question is this: If consciousness, the ability to think, to know, is just a useless by-product of the world-old welter of mechanical forces, how did it ever come to be at all, seeing that physical force can never change into anything but another form of itself? An extraordinary result, surely: in the little clot of animated dust called man, this thing which materialism describes as primarily without life and without feeling has in some unaccountable way blossomed into vitality, and thought, and love! There is only one way out of the impasse. If in the long run it is matter that knows and thinks, then matter cannot be just what we took it to be at the outset. We must go back and revise our theories. It must be something divinely wonderful, out of which all this glory of the lighted mind has come.

And in point of fact, when you ask this last question of the greatest scientists, they are all in a hurry to deny that they are materialists. "The theory of materialism," says Professor Huxley, "is as utterly devoid of justification

as the most baseless theological dogma." It is Darwin who says, " If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance—that is, without design or purpose." And we seem to catch a note of bitterness and annoyance in Herbert Spencer's voice, when we hear him say, " Considering that I have taught that force can be regarded only as a conditional effect of the Unconditioned Cause, I might reasonably have thought that no one would call me a materialist." Even Haeckel repudiates the idea that Science can have anything to do with " the materialism which denies the existence of spirit and describes the universe as a heap of dead atoms."

Because the universe is too wonderful to be grasped by finite mind, that is no reason for believing, as so many do, that it is not the creation of Infinite Mind. Still more inexplicable would be the miracle, if it were the off-spring of no Mind at all. Behind, and in, all force and matter in the universe there is guiding and controlling Mind. And the Spirit which breathes through all the energy of creation has come to itself at last in

man, creation's flower, the being who says "I know."

But are we content to rest with this result? Does not the spirit in man also guide and control the material forces around him? Take any of the great human inventions. The pertinent question has been asked, "How is it that the liner conquers the ocean?" and answered, "Simply because there is more mind in the liner than in the ocean." There are forces stored up in the ocean's breast vaster far by millions of times; but this creation of man's is the embodiment of ideas. "A single idea formed in one tiny skull will chain your Niagara, and turn its wild rush into a humble factory worker."

Or call to mind a great world-personality like Julius Cæsar. Was it the little store of physical force in his body that established by conquest the mighty Roman Empire? Was it not the intellect and spirit that guided and controlled that energy, and the energies of the armies of Rome? Force is not enslaved by force, but only by directing intelligence.

The most dramatic event in the great European war was the liberation of Jerusalem

from the dreary rule of the Turk. Jerusalem is the shrine that gave the world the revelation of the One God; and Turkey is the nation whose religion is the worship of Force. The liberation of Jerusalem is to us a symbol of the victory of ideals over materialistic Might. William Watson sang of the Turk's defeat in the Balkan War of 1911:

> The forts of midnight fall at last;
> The ancient baleful powers
> Yield up, with countenance aghast,
> Their dragon-guarded towers.
> Henceforth, their might as dust being trod,
> 'Tis easier to believe in God."

It is easier still, to-day, though the end is not yet. Always and everywhere in the end mind is master over matter.

But the mastery is more complete than appears from consideration of the merely intellectual side of man. Conscience is a power superior to cleverness. When Luther, at the Diet of Worms, stood up before all the prestige and political power of the Roman Church, and cried, "Here stand I, I can do no other," he let loose an impulse from the human conscience which "shook the world."

Conscience is the force that is going to rule mind, and govern the world.

But higher even than conscience is love, that force in the soul of man that is one day going to rule the human conscience, and sway the universe, when the kingdom of God is come. For we turn at the end to think of the simple Galilean Peasant who owned not a fraction of material power or worldly prestige; and of the mighty stream of holy love that began to flow, nineteen hundred years ago, from the unsealed fountain of His heart among the quiet hills of Nazareth. Think in the most materialistic way you like of all that has already resulted. Stand before any of those majestic cathedrals with which England and Europe are studded. Let their greatness and sublimity subdue you. And then remember that not one stone of all those glorious creations would ever have been placed upon another, if Jesus of Nazareth had not lived and loved and died. Think how far the influence of His love and purity has travelled —into the most secluded corner of the land, into the remotest island of the sea. We recall how Carlyle once took Emerson a walk among his Dumfriesshire hills. They came at length

to an eminence which overlooked a quiet valley. Down in that rural vale the old parish church of Dunscore stood up sturdily into the sky, and arrested the attention. After a moment of silence Carlyle turned to his friend: "Emerson, Jesus Christ died eighteen hundred years ago. Jesus Christ built that church. Jesus Christ brought you and me together here."

The spiritual influence of that life has wrought vaster changes in human history than all that the mechanical forces of evolution have brought about since the foundation of the world. And still, we believe, it is only at the beginning of its heavenly conquests. When, in face of this, the materialist says there is no soul, no spirit in man that is greater than the dead, blind dust in motion, we may confidently leave the onus of the proof with him. "There *is* a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding."

And this great fact, demonstrated by a life once lived, speaks home to us. Be no longer crushed by that outer tyranny of the material world, however impressive its vastness; or by that endless passing away of all things

beneath the sun. Believe once again in the immortal dignity of your God-given soul. Cultivate a greater spiritual self-respect. Say to your soul, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Nay hear, as though it spoke to you, the voice of the Spirit of God to the abject prophet long ago, "Son of man, stand up on thy feet, and I will speak to thee." Look abroad on all the world of men, bathed in a flood of new light and Divine meaning; and see that that light is the light of immortal Love, spreading out from a Cross beside Jerusalem. The Man of Nazareth died because He loved men. And He loved them because He knew that they had souls; and that their souls, even though broken and lost in a quagmire of failure and sin, were yet of eternal worth to God.

II

What is the Soul?

"Let us search and examine our ways and turn again to the Lord."—LAMENTATIONS iii. 40.

"Commune with your own heart . . . and be still." PSALM iv. 4.

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."—PSALM xciv. 19.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" MARK viii. 37.

WHEN Socrates lay in prison quietly waiting the hemlock that was to end his life, his friend Crito asked him, "How shall we bury you?" "In any way you like," replied Socrates, "but you must first get hold of me, and take care that I do not run away from you." Socrates' witticism is his confession of faith that the mysterious Something, the spiritual energy that calls itself "I," "me," is not identical with that lifeless form of clay: it has eluded the grasp of Death.

"No man," says an old Psalmist, "can buy back his brother from Death." And we agree, for a different reason than his to-day: Death does not possess him. You can put all the most precious things—love and longing, prayers and tears—into the one scale-pan; and let Death and corruption weight the other. But even if Death had not a stony heart, and could attend to your offer of the dearest treasures of your life, it would be madness to imagine you were bargaining for a soul. It is only the vesture of the flesh that Death can claim.

And what is thus true of death is true of every other crisis or transition in life. Nowhere do we catch a glimpse of the souls of our friends as they pass us. We give pleasure to our friends when we hand them a gift; but it is not the hand that grasps the gift that is pleased, nor yet the smiling lips, nor lighted eyes. It is the unseen energy that says "I." Speech or smile or clouded brow, hand-clasp or kiss of greeting or of parting, are but the signals which soul makes to soul. We cannot perceive an individual with the senses, nor can we grasp the essence of an individual in our thought. As Royce of Harvard has put it

"It is with the individual of daily life as with the lady of Browning's lyric, for whom the lover searches through 'room after room' of the house they 'inhabit together':

> 'Yet the day wears,
> And door succeeds door;
> I try the fresh fortune—
> Range the wide house from the wing to the centre
> Still the same chance! She goes out as I enter!'

And now, if you ask why this lady is thus elusive, I answer, Because she is an individual. And an individual is a being that no finite search can find." The same writer reminds us that we can only bring out the differences between things or individuals by means of their fundamental resemblances. "It is much easier to be aware of a definite difference or contrast between two poets than it is to be conscious of the difference or contrast between a poet and a blackberry or a parabola." And he quotes a pathetically beautiful illustration of the consequent failure of human thought to describe the unique being. "The soldiers in Bayard Taylor's Sebastopol lyric, as they sing in the trenches, before they storm the fort, try to confess each

the tearful secret of his own heart, as he thinks of home, but they do so in words that are the same for all of them :—

> " Each heart recalled a different name,
> But all sang *Annie Laurie !* "

It is in the *will* that the secret of individuality lies wrapped up. Our only hope of discovering something of its significance is in turning in upon ourselves.

Shall we then hold a cross-questioning with our own souls ? If we obey the Psalmist's injunction: " Commune with your own heart . . . and be still," perhaps we shall find another Hebrew singer's confession to God to be true for us also : " In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul."

Yet at the very outset, an outer door of sense and flesh seems to bar our approach even to ourselves. How shall we knock so as to secure entrance ? The way of commonsense is to say, " I possess a soul." And the assertion is heavily weighted with uncorrected assumptions. The most naïve of these is that it is the body which possesses the soul. It is, of course, the soul which possesses the body

The body is but the instrument through which we apprehend the outer world. The soul has really a much wider range of activity than the life of the senses. But an equally erroneous assumption in this statement is that "I" am different from my soul. We correct these assumptions when we say "I *am* a soul." For this assertion breaks the spell of the material world which ever deludes us into picturing the soul as just a shadowy impalpable body, filling space and having form and outline like our mortal flesh. The soul is just our personality, our self. When we first uttered that word "I" in childhood, it was one of the initial acts of will in which a soul was born. And when we say "I am a soul" the door opens, and we are allowed access into the presence of the soul—our Self.

And now our interview with the soul begins. When we proceed to question it, the first response which the soul makes to us is to say "*I am—I exist.*" At first sight, this does not seem to carry us very far. You pick up a stone from the roadside. As you hold it in your hand you say, "That stone exists." But can the stone say that it exists? It is

only you who say it for the stone. The stone does not know that it exists. But you know—you have the power to think the thought of your own existence. That power makes a difference between you and the stone more tremendous than the difference between light and darkness. Nay, in the very act of saying "I am," the soul proclaims itself superior to all the myriads of the dead worlds that people space.

But still we are only at the threshold of the significance of this word. Long ago in the history of religion a great discovery was made to the soul of a lonely man. "Whom shall I say that thou art?" he asked of the Voice that talked with him in the vision. And the Lord said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM." Next to Christ's experience of God, that was the revelation of profoundest significance for the history of the world; when, in the empty, sterile, and destructive waste of the desert, this brooding man, beside his burning bush of insight, rose supreme above the thought of a blind, ruthless Power moving through the universe, and heard the Nameless give Itself a Name—learned that God was a Person,

the great "I AM." The soul alone shares the fellowship of God in this: it too has the power to say "I am I."

We resume our colloquy with the soul. And before we have time to question further, pressing out along with that first response comes this: "*I am myself and not another.*" For is it not the case that whenever you begin to think of your own personality, your own self, almost the first conviction that arises in you is that the self speaks from behind closed doors? The soul has an inner life which no other soul can invade or violate. I can tell you about my experiences, and you may understand something of their meaning, because you have had similar experiences. But you do not thereby enter and *feel* my experience. If I tell you "I am weary," "I feel glad," you may respond with sympathy. But your sympathetic sorrow or joy is not the weariness or gladness that I feel. Yes, right in the inmost shrine of our being the soul says "I live apart—solitary."

> "Thus on the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless, watery wild,
> We mortal millions live, alone."

Our audience with the soul proceeds. And in answer to our eager questioning we are given this further response: *I am myself behind all my experiences.* I love, I hate, I laugh, I weep, but *I* am not the love, the hate, the sorrow, or the joy. There could be no love, hate, joy, sorrow, unless behind them all there were an "I." All those thoughts, feelings, resolves, —that inner life which I tell you about—that is not "I." "I am more than the sum of them all."—How elusive and mysterious this "I" is proving itself to be! Just when we thought we were about to touch the fringe of its secret, it has escaped from our grasp.

And some have returned from the seemingly vain pursuit, declaring that there is no "I" apart from the experiences; or if there is anything at all, it is at the most only an idea or notion wandering among our other impressions and thoughts. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, held this view. I look in on my own conscious life, he argued, and I have never yet been able to catch myself disengaged—free for a moment from all those clamorous and thronging folk, my thoughts and feelings. I find only a room full of guests

chattering to a host who is not there! Or else this "I" that is always talking about itself is just another notion, another guest in the room that belongs to nobody, mingling with the crowd. To change the figure, conscious life is just like one of those desert streams which emerge from the sand, flow on a little way above the surface, and then disappear in the sand again. The notion which is "I" is but a drop in the stream. Surely the soul is entitled to retort to this strange argument of Hume's, "How can a mere drop, down in the depth of the stream, be conscious that there is a stream, still less know anything about the long winding valley of life through which it flows? Yet 'I' know . . ."

To be quite fair, let us give Hume's own figure. He says the mind is nothing but a "bundle of sensations and impressions." But he admits that the something that calls itself "I" is the band that binds the bundle together. Must it not, therefore, be something more than a mere member of the bundle? It cannot be simply one thought among the rest, that is able to comprehend all those other thoughts of the mind. Apart from a thinker,

thoughts have no independent life of their own. When John Stuart Mill, the English philosopher, visited Edinburgh, he went to Calton graveyard where Hume's mortal remains lie buried; and looking down at the grave, with a rueful smile he said, "Here lies that bundle of sensations and impressions that was once called David Hume." Mill's smiling jest seems to sweep the old sceptic's theory into the grave along with him. Hume's analysis ends in its own defeat. For if all that we comprehend without us and within consists entirely of sensations and impressions, the case is more fantastic than that of Alice and her companions, when she was told that they were nothing but sorts of things within the dream of the snoring Red King. All is a dream which is being dreamed by nobody. Nay, the case is more fantastic still. All is a dream of which the dreamer is himself a fragment. If the dreamer woke, dream and dreamer alike would "go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

Like greedy reporters, eager for more copy, we turn once more to prolong this exciting interview with the soul. And deep in the inmost citadel of its being we hear it say

"*I will.* I am free. I refuse to be the slave of circumstance." And here we seem to see the outside world, which was content to look quietly on while the soul merely said "I am," rising up now to protest, and even to mock, when the soul makes this daring claim to come out and invade the world. "Nay," says the world to the soul, "you are a creature of time; you must drift with the stream of time. You cannot put back the hands of the world's clock a single second with your puny 'I will.' You did not will your own existence. You cannot fight heredity. The very physical features with which you are hereditarily endowed determine whether you are to be criminal, genius, or saint. And you cannot fight with Death and prevail. You may say 'I will' as long as you like, but you cannot prevent the approach of the hour when the clock of fate will strike for you. Your 'I will' is a great delusion."

But the soul has its answer to this forbidding voice of crass, brute fact. The soul says, I never denied that there was an element of inevitableness about life. But the whole history of the human race is the answer of the soul to fate. That history discloses an

ever-growing freedom, an increasing mastery over the outer world. The human will that a few thousand years ago had not resource enough to fashion the humblest tool, has to-day harnessed the lightning, and linked oceans which a stupendous mountain range divided. And the soul with its "I will," can by the grace of God, outreach heredity also. So far from the shape of the skull determining the quality of the soul, there is a power behind the lowest brain in the most degraded of humanity's "broken earthenware," which, once wakened by Divine Love, will light up and refine, and even remould the face.

And is there anyone, looking over the achievements of the human race, who will venture to set limits to the soul's claim to be free? Has Duty, that great mistress of the conscience, ever spoken a command to the soul, and received the reply "Impossible"?

> "So near is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers, 'Lo, thou must,'
> The youth replies, 'I can.'"

Yea, when we listen to the soul in its highest moments, we hear a voice which comes from

the inmost shrine of the conscience, saying, "*I must, I must.*" Nowhere are we more convinced of the immortal worth of the human soul, nowhere are we so sure it is something that wears the likeness of God Himself, as where we hear it say "I must." When, in the Christian dawn, we see Paul prostrate on the road outside Damascus, crying "I must obey—what wilt Thou have me to do?" When we see Luther defying the Pope's emissary with his "I must—I can no other"; when we hear Jesus saying "I must work the works of Him that sent me." . . . "I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" . . . "The Son of Man must die"; when we see Him at last stretching out His hands on the Cross in obedience to no other "must" but that, we kneel to adore, and wonder at the heights of possibility wrapped up in this marvellous something called the soul.

Here, at the end of all our questionings, we bring the soul into the presence of this Jesus, the greatest of all the souls that History has known. To the Christian He is "the Truth," because, when we stand in the presence of *His*

soul, we feel that we have come in from wandering in the cold and dark, into the presence-chamber all lighted with the radiant certainty of God. We hear Jesus summoning us to believe in God as our Divine Father. We hear Him tenderly proclaiming that there is a place for the least, and the last, and the lost in the thoughts of God. What folly it is for man to dare to consider God as his Father; yea, and what folly—reverently be it spoken—for God to bend over the soul with such infinite care, if the soul is only a stream of sensations and thoughts which empties itself in the sands of time at length, and disappears! I hear Christ summoning me to obey the Divine call. Why summon *me*, if I am but jetsam or flotsam drifting on the tide of Fate? I hear the Master saying, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." But if the soul is merely the shifting phantasmagoria of a dream, then that command is a cruel mockery. As well tell my shadow to breathe, as ask me, a mere illusion, to imitate God.

But He will not let me go. Because I have made myself unfit to imitate God, by my failure and sin, He comes to me with

outstretched hands—for of this that amazing Life, that Death, have made me surest of all—He comes to me, to say that God stoops down to offer me forgiveness; and to bid me to repent. Can God forgive a mere vapour that appeareth but for a moment and then vanisheth away? And yet, Christ said, all heaven hangs in suspense over the moment of my turning back to God. It is in that moment that the soul most truly finds itself—comes to itself, a prodigal in the far country. And the nearer the soul comes to God, the surer it grows of itself. The more intimate its communion with God becomes, the more certain does it become of its own individuality. We believe in the eternal reality of the soul for this supreme reason, that we see it in the light of Christ's unveiling of the heart of God the Heavenly Father.

Next to the gift of His redeeming love, this is the gift which it has cost God most to give us—this tremendous gift of personality. It is not yet completed. Only by strenuous endeavour do we enter into full possession of the soul. And this fact carries with it the dread possibility of abusing the gift, undoing the

soul. I may stifle all those high and holy thoughts and aspirations which are the soul's true birthright, and seek to satisfy it only by material possessions. I may think to gain the world thereby. It is the world that has gained me. I have lost my soul—filled its life and wasted its holiest powers with interests that crumble and fade away. And some day when I am done with the world and it with me forever, what shall it profit me then? Can I carry my soul, thus thirled to the dead things of time, out beyond death into eternity? How shall I ever buy back my soul, once it is lost? What can I give—what *can* I give—in exchange for a thing so precious?

III

Whence comes the Soul?

"The God of the spirits of all flesh."—NUM. xxvii. 16.
"Return unto thy rest, O my soul."—PSALM cxvi. 7.
"The Spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
ECCLES. xii. 7.

LIFE is a short and stormy journey across a narrow strip of land which lies between two oceans, the face of each of which is shrouded in mist close in to the shore. Everyone that has watched a new-born infant sleeping has been visited by the question, Whence has the young soul come? A half-opened blossom of conscious life wafted on the wings of sleep out of the ocean-mists on to the shores of time—it brings no answer to your question but a cry. It plays for a little on the strand, a game of smiles and tears; then rises and takes its restless journey of shine and shadow, across the mountains and valleys of time; reaches at last the moaning shore of the ocean of Death; and

vanishes into the mist and the great silence beyond. "Thus," says Carlyle, "we emerge from the Inane, haste stormfully across the astonished earth, and plunge again into the Inane . . . But whence? Oh, heaven, whither? Sense knows not; faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God to God."

From God? . . . That is the question. Has the matured soul anything—any hint or suggestion to give as to whence it has come? Let us question the soul again. It has told us something arresting and suggestive about itself, when it said "I am I"; when it said "I will," "I must," "I can." Perhaps it can help us further here. And when, at our prompting, it resumes its confessions, we hear it say, "*I wonder, I long, I aspire.*"

How far does that word carry us? Does it not mean that the soul is rising beyond its finitude, beyond this world of sense and time in which it finds itself, and reaching out and out into the boundless, the infinite, the eternal? Surely the mystery of the human soul deepens around us as we listen to this new note of longing. There comes to mind one of the few

golden words out of the grey and gloomy pages of Ecclesiastes: "God hath made all things beautiful in their time; also He hath set Eternity in men's hearts." Here is a man, who has found life dull and disappointing, confessing—unconsciously perhaps—the reason: he has found a sense of the infinite, a craving that only eternity can fill, in his heart—a feeling which his philosophy of Despair, repeated and repeated in such impressive ways, cannot stifle. There can be no doubt about the existence of this instinct in every human soul, sceptic, agnostic, and believer alike. Ask your own soul, what was it that led you to read this page? Was it not the stirring of that wonder, that longing, that desire to know. Set aside for the moment the question whether the feeling itself is true or false, whether it is a delusion or whether it can be justified. Merely let the mind take in the full significance of the fact that this yearning exists—that it is *there*.

If the power to say "I am I" places an immeasurable distance between us and the stone, does not this power to long make a vast and significant difference between us and the

"beasts that perish"? Between Wordsworth, for example, haunted with the sense of some unseen, gigantic personality as he gazes at the sublimity of the mountains—and the sheep whose sole concern is with the grass it is cropping on the hillside near by? Between Meredith, standing before the unfolded petals of a rose, wondering what in the last resort this miraculous thing called Nature must be, whose breast has power to yield a thing so ravishingly lovely, mystic, wonderful—and the dog sniffing at it for a moment as he passes? What is the significance of this impulse which has driven man, alone among animated things, out on an endless quest, tirelessly pushing back the wall of ignorance, extending the bounds of knowledge, building up for himself the marvel of modern science, with its glory of discovery and triumph of achievement? Is it not the betrayal of a primal belief in the soul that it belongs to eternity and not to time? That our life is more than a mere throbbing handful of dust; that we do not altogether come

> "Into this Universe, the why not knowing,
> Nor whence—like water, willy, nilly flowing;"

that the soul, with its far-off visions and ideals

of truth, beauty and love, has come out of the bosom of a Divine life which lies behind it all—that it is a thought of God, perchance, translated into life by the Will Divine ?

"Like a tide on a crescent sea-beach, when the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings come, swelling and surging in—
Come from the mystic ocean, whose rim no foot hath trod :
Some of us call it *Longing*, and others call it God ";

Is it a delusion—this instinct of the soul ? Such a doctrine would imply frustration and mockery of the entire process of creation—the age-long story of the travailing earth. If we were nothing more than fragments of the life of Nature, this Nature could never have created in us instincts and desires which outreach herself. Nature does not produce falsehoods. Nor does she use falsehoods to further the high ends of her own unfolding. But more, Nature has not mocked man's thirst to know. One by one she has yielded up her secrets, vast and wonderful, to man. And still she stands before him with loftier treasures in her hands, waiting for the hour when man shall have grown great enough to grasp them. Nay, the very presence of this impulse in the soul,

which has already done so much for men, is surely Nature's tender hint as to her last and greatest secret. Is she perhaps the Slave of a spiritual and personal God?

John Woolman was, as the poet Whittier tells us, "a figure only four and a half feet high, hunchbacked, with projecting chest, legs small and uneven, arms longer than his legs; a huge head showing only beneath the enormous white hat, large, solemn eyes, and a prominent nose; the rest of his face covered with a snowy semicircle of beard falling low on his breast—a figure to recall the old legends of troll, brownie, and kobold." But surely his life was a demonstration of the soul's nobler lineage. When, on his mission to the Red Indians, we see him, alone in the forest at night, without a fire, sitting through the heavy rain, beside a fallen tree, and occupying himself with what he calls "a sweet meditation on the love of God," we cannot but believe that "that which drew from out the boundless deep" is turning again unerringly towards Home. Religion on the human side of it may be defined as the homing instinct of the soul. And in the presence of such a soul as Woolman we

are constrained to repeat with conviction the beatitude which Lavater of Zurich coined: "Blessed are the home-sick, for they shall reach home."

Yes, when we turn to watch the soul in its noblest moods, whether it be in the faiths of India, or in the experiences of the great souls that speak in our own sacred Scriptures, it is the same voice that we hear repeating in endless ways: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Was not this the fundamental conviction in the heart of Christ Himself, when He described the repentance of the prodigal in the far country as a turning back home? Can this divine home-sickness of the soul be a delusion? Could there be any home-sickness if there were no Home? When the soul, in response to its noblest emotions, says, "Go back to thy rest," can we permit cold reason to tell us it is an empty fancy; or allow the still colder fear of the heart to trace over the face of the world the leer of a mocking devil, hilarious that he has cheated men so successfully with his colossal lie?

If, then, the soul's universal pining for what is not implies a what-has-been, has the soul anything more definite to tell us about its

spiritual home, and its journey hither? Many indeed are the voices that we hear upon this theme; but there is no clear, decisive, and unanimous voice, nothing that wins consent from all human souls; only isolated voices, speaking at rare intervals, and with stammering tongues.

Probably there are few among us who have not been visited by moments when the waking world around us seemed unreal—when we were haunted with the vague feeling that everything we were seeing or hearing had happened before—when some thought out of the pages of a new book struck on the mind with a strange familiarity, as if we had known it in the Long Ago—when, after the first few moments' intercourse with a new friend, there came to us the strong impression that we must have known him centuries before. A moment like that, for instance, which Sir Walter Scott has recorded in his Journal:

> "I cannot, I am sure, tell if it is worth marking down that yesterday at dinner time I was strangely haunted by what I would call the sense of pre-existence—*videlicet*, the confused idea that nothing that passed was said for the first time, that the same topics had been discussed, and the same persons had stated the same opinions

on the same subjects. . . . The sensation was so strong as to resemble what is called a mirage in the desert, or a calenture on board ship, when lakes are seen in the desert, and sylvan landscapes in the sea. It was very distressing yesterday, and brought to my mind the fancies of Bishop Berkeley about an ideal world." (Feb., 1828.)

Or a moment like that described by the poet Henley, when he asks in one of his lyrics :

" When, in what other life,
Where, in what old spent star,
Systems ago, dead vastitudes afar,
Were we two bird and bough, or man and wife,
Or wave and spar ?
Or I the beating sea and you the bar
On which it breaks ? I know not, I !
But this, O this, my Very Dear, I know,
Your voice awakes old echoes in my heart,
And things I say to you now are said once more.
And, Sweet, when we two part,
I feel I have seen you falter and linger so,
So hesitate and turn and cling, yet go,
As once in some immemorable Before,
Once on some fortunate, yet thrice-blasted shore."

Or a moment such as Tennyson records, in which we seem

" To lapse far back in a confused dream
To states of mystical similitude."

A moment when we seem to be beset with what Wordsworth calls

"Those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,—
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised."

Yet when we turn to the pages of Scripture to search for some clear and unambiguous answer to the perplexity which these strange experiences create, we find that the great torch-bearers of the soul seem to have entered into a conspiracy of silence. Once, it would appear, the opportunity to probe the mystery of the soul's beginning came to Christ when His disciples asked Him about the man born blind. But He deliberately passed it by. Can it be that God does not wish us to know? We prefer to believe that the soul of man is not yet fitted and prepared for the revelation. Nay, if it were a matter on which the soul, with its irrepressible conjecturings might be apt to lead us hopelessly and viciously wrong, we cannot believe that the wise and tender God whom Jesus has revealed *would* have left us in total darkness. God has no desire to suppress these human questionings. Our

very ignorance is the Divine encouragement to the noble guesses of the soul.

And what are those noble guesses of the soul?

The one that has fired the world's imagination most has been the belief in the soul's *pre-existence*—the belief, namely, that we, who know ourselves as separate and solitary individuals here, existed before we were born as the same separate individuals in the unseen spiritual world. And it must be admitted that we owe some of the finest pages of the world's literature to this belief. Plato made this claim for the soul, when he argued that all the experience of this our finite life is just a process of waking up out of the sleep of forgetfulness into which the soul was plunged before birth—a calling back into the mind (by the help of those struggling rays of reason shining on the things which come to us through the dream of the senses) of the eternal Ideas, the thoughts of God, which once, before the days of this earthly prison-house, were the soul's familiar friends.

And one of the greatest poems in the English language, Wordsworth's "Ode on the

Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of Childhood," was inspired by the same belief in pre-existence.

> " Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar :
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home."

Does the explanation of the soul's faculty for wonder lie wrapped up in that belief? Plato says that human life is a process of remembering: and Wordsworth describes it as a process of forgetting. The arguments of those two great souls rest on an entirely opposite reading of the facts of life. They cannot both be right. And we cannot accept without question a claim for pre-existence that can be based on such utterly contradictory sets of " facts." But, further, if we consider all that is involved in Wordsworth's view—if the meaning of life is that the older we get, and the nearer we come to the grave, we do but get further and further away from the thoughts and memories of our spiritual Home—that is

surely a very despairing view of this earthly life indeed. Does it not more befit the devout soul to search for some Divine meaning in this life which we know, than to cling to the dream of pre-existence at the cost of belittling our earthly existence? And then—if Plato's view has still to be reckoned with—we must remember that Plato never declares that the soul remembers *itself* as having lived in that shadowy Long Ago. And if the soul comes into this life forgetting so completely all the experiences that it had previously enjoyed, that fact—if it is a fact—would strike at the root of the strongest of all the instincts, the most precious of all the hopes of the human heart—the desire for immortality, the expectation of a life which will be in some real way continuous with this life, a life in which we shall enter into a deeper yet continuous communion with the God we now adore. If, when we die out of this life and emerge into another, we forget so completely the life we have left behind, the thought of immortality would be stripped of all its interest and appeal.

Nevertheless, let us note the profound assumption that lies behind this fascinating

guess of pre-existence. The whole strength and religious value of it lie in the conviction which it so passionately utters—that our souls have come through the dark passage of birth out of the primeval source of all life, the living God. And the meaning of all the wonder and longing of the human soul is that "we are haunted forever by the Eternal Mind."

And here another of the great guesses of man about the shadowy past which lies behind this life comes into view—we mean the *Pantheistic guess*. Go out into the waning light, some summer evening. Watch yonder frowning cloud that hides the westering sun, as it drags its vast mass writhing onwards, rent and pierced by the wind. And through those rents and gaps in the cloud observe the rays of sunlight slanting down upon the world. Suppose those several rays of sunlight were endowed with consciousness, so that any one of them might say, "I who have lately glanced on the running stream, and shone a moment since on the smoky pall above the city, am shining now upon this snow-streaked mountain-top: I am the same through all these changing

experiences." Would it not be a sublime delusion? Only the single, mighty sun, far, far behind that cloud, could really speak that "I." And then perhaps this old fear visits you, What if the soul of man is just like the sun-filled rent in yonder cloud; what if we human beings are only the transparent places in the visible screen of creation, where the Unseen Power behind it all has worn its way through at length, and now looks in upon this scene of time? May it not be that this little mental ray of sunlight—this stream of thoughts and feelings which I call myself, my soul—is under a grand delusion when it says "I"; that there is only one Spiritual Being, one Soul in all the universe; that it is the same "I" that speaks in us all? This conjecture is the voice of Pantheism. The spell of this old guess concerning the riddle of the soul's origin has lain on the human race from the days of the Rigveda mystics until now. Thomas Carlyle repeated it in his way, when he said "We are we know not what; light sparkles floating on the ether of Deity." It is in India, the home of Pantheism, that it finds its best expression. Kabir says:

"He is immersed in all consciousness, in all joys and all sorrows;
He has no beginning and no end;
He holds all within His bliss . . .
He is without form, without quality, without decay;
Seek thou union with Him!"

It can be made very beautiful, touched with the emotion of religion:

"As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water: so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant . . .
As the river enters into the ocean, so my heart touches Thee."

Yet as we listen, conscience awakens and speaks in us to give the extreme form of the world-old thought the lie. Conscience will not consent to a Pantheism that would deny to the soul of man an independent and responsible life of its own. Such a Pantheism is a "detestable moral error," says Francis Newman, "in comparison to which simple atheism is a light mistake. Every sin of every wicked man is converted into a direct act of Deity; an idea than which nothing can be more blasphemous." And the mind, urged by conscience, begins to ask questions of the Pantheist: You say "God is *All*. There is nothing but God." You dare not stop short of asserting that all the multiplicity and variety

of the world is illusion. Or you say, "All is God." You mean, God is nothing but everything. You cannot stop short of affirming there is no God but the Universe. In neither case are we left with anything which we can really call God. In the one case all the living detail is evaporated away into pure Being, an empty abstraction about which nothing can be named. In the other case you may talk about the ultimate Reality in what quasi-religious terms you please, you are talking about nothing but a material whole of things out of which all life and all consciousness has come, and in terms of which it can be explained away. Dusty answers! The final result may be Pan-something, but it is not Pan-theism.

So in the end we are left to sing of ourselves as Rabindranath Tagore has sung, in terms of pathetic beauty:

> "I am like a remnant of the cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and years separated from thee.
>
> "If this be thy wish and if this be thy play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

"And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent."

But now let us notice once again how this second great guess at the origin of the soul rests also in the same profound conviction that out of the life of God we all have come. There is a true Pantheism, the Pantheism of St. Paul, who speaks of the God "of whom and through whom, and to whom are all things: to Him be glory for ever"; of St. Paul who adopts the language of a Greek poet he loved to read, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

And here, finally, a third guess at the origin of the human soul comes into view. It is the theory that every soul begins its career as such, when it enters this human life of ours. So far as Scripture lends countenance to any view it is to this one. At first sight it seems more modest than the other guesses. Rightly understood, it is nobler than them all. It is truer to the facts. It does not view the soul as a substance, an impenetrable atom, nor yet as a vapour that vanisheth away, but as a life that grows. And if the soul has the long story of natural evolution behind it, why should we

be afraid of accepting that, if we believe that the material world itself is in the long run a manifestation of the infinite Divine mind? It is a thought that satisfies the wonder of the soul, to conceive of the world as the nursery designed by God for the express purpose of growing souls. It kindles the imagination, to think of God, the Husbandman, laying out the vast demesne of nature with its patient laws, in order that through its long travail there might blossom at last in time this perfect flower of creation, the human soul. "Ye are God's husbandry," says St. Paul. Does it not fill us with a tender reverence to think of God labouring with all this tremendous cost of energy, in order to fashion at length souls with wills separated from His own, independent personalities who might one day learn to commune with Him, take part with Him in His infinite purposes, render Him back the love for which He longs? "So exquisite is the delicacy of His non-obtrusion," says a modern writer, "so subtly sensitive the Glory that conceals itself, that He withdraws behind the veil of Nature, and the operations of the mind, and the ordinary movements of

life, to give us the power of standing at a certain distance from Him, that we may contemplate and converse with Him, or, if we will, misdeem and forsake Him for a season."

The soul, on this view, when those high thoughts and wonders enter it, is not remembering back a life that it left behind when it arrived upon this scene of time. It is responding to the Divine education here and now—responding to God's soul, calling to us through a thousand avenues—of beauty and duty, of love and life, of grandeur and goodness. Those feelings, wonders, longings, aspirations, come to us because upon "the soul—this quivering compound of thought and feeling—the great universe, which is the instrument of God, has through the ages struck its varying note of joy and sorrow, of triumph and defeat; its gentler touch of love, friendship, peace, happiness; its harsher strokes of pain, hardship, decay, death; and drawn from it a growing response of faith, trust, resignation, prayer—religion." It is the touch of the hand of God upon the soul, waking it into light, leading it to realise at length that out of the very being of God it has come, and to Him it will return. It is

deep calling unto deep—the heart of God calling to the heart of man, the heart of man answering to the Hand of God.

How can man, made in the very image of God— man into whose frail body God Himself has breathed His own living breath—deface that image, proving false to His divine pedigree? Must it not be his to seek by every means of grace—by faith, and love, and penitence—to cleanse the mirror of his soul? From God—yes, *from God*, we have come. And blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Him face to face. He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh," and "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"

IV

Why Comes the Soul Here?

"In your endurance do you win possession of your soul."
LUKE xxi. 19.

"Let us go on unto perfection."—HEBREWS vi. 1.

"Till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—EPHESIANS iv. 13.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THE key-word which unlocks most of the secret chambers of the universe for our day is the word "Evolution." Science bids us carry the imagination back to a time before the heavens were garnished with constellations. It bids us picture the cold, celestial spaces pervaded by a sort of luminous mist, a nebular fire-dust, as the beginning of things. Then, swiftly travelling down epochs and æons of time, it bids us watch the eddies and rings, the

knots and swirls and clusters, gathering themselves together in this star-dust, and slowly building themselves into the systems of suns and planets which the night-sky reveals to us.

Then, taking up the story of this little earth of ours—a tiny planet in a second-rate solar system—science bids us watch the earth evolving, a shapeless, molten mass of fiery lava streams, cooling and compacting through millions of years, till there emerges the wrinkled globe of dry land and water and atmosphere; then changing and changing through thousands of ages, until there comes about that balance of the forces of nature—gravitation, heat and cold, light and dark—which makes the condition in which animal and vegetable life can appear.

Then, turning from the hoary history of the rocks, science takes up the story of living things; and shows us this amazing force called life, starting from the lowly cell, the simple microscopic sac of pulsing matter, slowly building up more and more complex forms, till we reach at length the human body. And here the long story seems to come in sight of its earthly goal. Nowhere on the earth's surface

can science point us to any higher result of this sublime, creative process than man. The poet calls him creation's roof and crown.

But still the story is not ended. History's dawn lies six thousand years away; and echoes from a far more distant past come from the mists beyond. We can trace man's growth, from the days when our far-off ancestors ran naked in primeval forests, dwelt in caves, fought each other with rude stone axes, and knew nothing of the world beyond the circle of their own hills and valleys—down to this day of modern civilisation, that has girdled the earth with railway and steamship and telegraph, built colossal cities, and woven a net-work of traffic and commerce which binds the ends of the earth together.

Or if we turn to the inward side of the life of man, we can trace the growth of the human soul in its hankerings after the Unseen, from the debasing superstitions of the savage who worshipped in dread the totem and the fetish, or offered sacrifices to appease the ghosts of dead ancestors, up through the pantheon of Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Greek and Roman

gods, to the worship of the one Divine Spirit through whom all things are created, sustained and guided, reaching the highest revelation of Him in the soul of Jesus of Nazareth, as God the Heavenly Father.

"A fire-mist and a planet, a crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a Saurian, and caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty, and a face turned from the clod—
Some call it *Evolution*, and others call it God."

In these few sentences I have been conducting you rapidly through the great temple of Creation. We have passed swiftly through the outer courts, until at last we are standing on the threshold of the inner shrine, the holy of holies of the soul. Will you cross that threshold now, and look into the life of your own individual soul? Is it not the case, as you glance along the story of your own life, and forecast the chapters that are still to come, when you think of the incapacity and helplessness of childhood, of your present experience and your matured powers, of your plans and hopes and dreams for the days that are still in the lap of the future, that you are driven to confess that this word "evolution" seems also

to hold the key to the meaning of your personality? The drama of creation is not yet ended. And the experts are nearly all agreed that it is no longer *life* but *mind* that is carrying on the story. Creation seems to be groaning and striving towards a goal. Indeed, it is not too much to say that this scientifically demonstrated fact of evolution, now that it is better understood, is rapidly destroying—if it has not already destroyed—the materialism which so long held the field. The world is just the expression of Spirit, and it exists for the further development of spirit. In short, the world exists in order to grow souls: it is, as the poet Keats called it, "the vale of soul-making." And Goethe, the supreme figure in the German literary world, has corroborated that conception: "It would have been for God a poor occupation to compose this heavy world out of simple elements, and to keep it rolling in the sunbeams from year to year, if He had not the plan of founding a nursery for a world of spirits upon this material basis." Under the eaves of a school in a Swiss canton among the mountains there is inscribed this motto:

" Ein Schulhaus bin Ich, von Menschen gebaut :
Gott stellte ein anderes hier : da schaut ! "

(A schoolhouse am I, men built on this ground ;
But a grander has God builded here : look around !)

It is a liberating thought for the soul to contemplate. It took all the by-gone ages of Creation, all the forces of the Universe, to make you what you are. And still you are uncompleted : still it doth not yet appear what you shall be ; you are but a soul in the making. And the reason why you have come here at all is just that you might become a soul—a completed personality : that by your own free activity in the experience of life, you might help God to complete His creation in you. " In your endurance," said Christ to His disciples—" in your persistent fidelity (to the best that is in you, to the highest that you have learned of Me) do you enter into possession of your soul." That is surely the Divine hint of the answer to the question from which we set out—Why comes the soul here ?

It is no new answer to the question. It is an answer which has frequently been given—the answer which the poet Browning, urging it in season and out of season, did so much to exalt to a new dignity :

"There is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim, . . .
If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,
And life, time—with all their chances, changes—just probation-space,
Mine, for me." (La Saisiaz.)

Does not this way of regarding human life help to make a little more intelligible and tolerable its mysteries? Why is it that between us and eternity there hang the veil of birth, the veil of death, and the beautiful veil of sense—the glory and the terror of earth and sea and sky—which allow only dim hints of the Unseen to struggle through and reach the soul? What is the meaning of our ignorance? Why is it that we do not know? What is the explanation of the awful silence of God? Accept the view that the earthly life of the soul is its probation-span, and you have an answer that at least robs your questioning of its bitter sting. If we are here to help God to complete His own creation in us, does it not follow that God must make the conditions of our existence here such as to call forth all our noblest energies and powers, all the longing, straining, striving, struggling after something

higher, in our hearts? The real truth is, not that God has set limits to our knowledge, but that our uncompleted souls, hindered by their own imperfections, have not yet reached the limits of the possibility of what we may know. We have got to learn by degrees how to use the heavenly treasures. We have got to develop by struggle the capacities that can receive these gifts that are waiting to disclose themselves to us. It is precisely in the effort of search, of choice, of aspiration, that the soul grows towards a perfect creation.

No doubt it is hard to believe it, in the face of the utter indifference of Nature. The world-order is no respecter of persons.

> "Void of emotion
> Nature's dead bosom.
> Shineth the sunlight
> On sinner and saint:
> On deed that is nameless,
> On blood of the hero
> Gleams the blind glory
> Of moonshine and stars."

We remember the rubber atrocities of the Congo and the Amazon; we think of the fearful crime that still darkens the face of Europe with the memory of awful years of bloodshed.

Down in the depths of our great cities a riot of nameless vice goes on, and the heavens give no sign. God does not directly interfere. Disease, pain, sorrow, loss, failure, dog the heels of good and bad alike, as if there were no Judge of all the earth to do right.

> "The heavens above make no disclosure,
> The earth keeps up its terrible composure."

In face of the almost intolerable silence of God it is hard to keep our faith. Nevertheless, it is by reason of that very severity of life that faith has lived and grown. Beneath the anguish of the problem weak souls may give up the struggle. But the strong souls break into hymns of trust and resignation.

"By the perilous peaks, by the cold black tops, I wandered and wept;
Into the holes of the rock that is fringe of Thy mantle I crept;
There in the storm, Thy breath, and under the shadow, Thy face,
I was safe, I believed, I had faith in the ultimate purpose and Grace.

Thou hast lifted me down to a land where the sunshine is gold on the stream,
Thou hast filled my measure with pleasure, and bodied my daringest dream:

But pride Thou hast made my companion, to whisper,
'Who's done this but you,
You alone by your merit and will?' And I think that the word is true.

. . . . .

"Pluck me, O God, from the plain; and lift me again to the height,
That in darkness and wrack and despair, I may bend to Thy will and Thy might,
I may find again faith and believe, I may crouch in Thy shadow, and see
Glimmer out, from the night of Thy wrath, the star of Thy Purpose for me."

Yes, God's silence is the counterpart of our freedom. Nature's relentless laws are the offset of the human spirit, and provide the occasion for faith. For faith is but the growth-pains of the soul. Fighting with Nature's imperturbability and cruelty, fighting with the hate and cynicism of those who have flung faith away, the soul of man has grown to be what it is to-day. It was at the end of a long catalogue of trial and persecution, loss, pain, death, that Jesus spoke this promise as worthy to compensate for it all: "In your patience—your enduring—your holding on to faith through all disaster—you enter into possession of your souls," enter into the

fellowship of all that is eternal, when you steadfastly serve the good.

"Our life is but a little holding, lent
To do a mighty labour: we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent
To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun."

When we view life so—as the soul's probation-span, the soul's time of struggle for its own existence, is there not shed a grateful ray upon almost every aspect of the mystery of life?

You are troubled perhaps by the littleness, the lowliness and insignificance of your lot. What part can *your* life have, you wonder, in the purposes and plans of God? It is only the blindness of unbelief and little faith that disparages the lowly tasks in life. But when to the vision of a full faith there comes, however momentarily, a vista of the whole plan of God; when we understand the intricacy of the web of life, and the delicate balance of the parts in the whole, we begin to understand how each life tells in the economy of God's purposes. And when we begin to see how all things seem to contribute to the Divine education of the soul, then the hope of an enlarged scope of service,

here or hereafter, gives a new dimension to the meaning of the little tasks. A young man shepherding his father's sheep in the uplands, or another hunting a few stray asses from the paternal farm, may find himself summoned to the lonely height of kingship. In the very hour of this transformation of vocation, he may become ecstatic so that onlookers cry, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Upon an Elisha ploughing, or an Amos gathering figs, the mantle of the prophet may fall. A young, sad-hearted butler, handing the wine-cup in the royal palace of Babylon, may become Nehemiah the leader of the exiles of God's own chosen people home. A Carpenter toiling thirty years at the bench did in an hour of awe and deep humility make the discovery that He was called to be God's Suffering Servant to the race of men, and His Divine Son.

The vision of the intricate web of life helps to convince us that all this is so, even when the end and purpose of an individual life is entirely hid from the individual. We are, even at the lowest, the shuttles by which God weaves the great web. We can see it at work in the lowlier creation. Every spring-time "as soon as the

anthers are ripe and shaking out the pollen, the stigmas on some other tree are ready to receive it. If an insect is necessary to effect the introduction, at the right moment, bees, moths, flies, and tiny beetles rise from the grave with a craving for honey which they proceed to satisfy without knowing what is the true end served. One cue calls them all, and they rush on the stage from opposite wings, not guessing that the Author intends to turn their seriousness into fun, or their fun into tragedy." It is a mistake to think of life as a *weary* struggle to keep soul and body together. Keeping soul and body together is a high and holy task. And if we see no further end in life, even this should be enough for us. Some day we shall learn what higher purpose God is accomplishing or intends to accomplish through our life, when He "has made the pile complete." It is not the measure of the responsibility that has been entrusted to you, but the measure of your faithfulness to your calling, be it great or small, that determines your eternal value and destiny. "A workshop," says Henry Drummond, "is not a place for making engines so much as a place for making men." There is a famous painting

by Murillo in the Louvre, entitled "The Miracle of San Diego." Two noblemen and a priest, looking into a kitchen, are struck with wonder to discover that all the kitchen-maids are angels. But might not the wonder be seen to be true, in many an instance, if life were suddenly made transparent with the glory of eternity? It is not cleverness but faithfulness—faithfulness over a few things—that makes you fit to be a ruler over five or ten cities in the day of your Lord's return.

The mystery of lives broken by ill-health is another aspect of the problem which the conception of life as a probation-span helps to mitigate, if not to solve. You may have been saddened by the spectacle of a dear friend of great gifts and graces compelled to languish through long years of suffering; and you may have been driven sometimes to ask a resentful "Why?" But has such a life been lived in vain? Has an enfeebled body always prevented the great tasks from being accomplished? Surely the will has often been made strong, and courage made heroic to endure. Here is the portrait of a man: "little, thin, shock-headed, undignified in appearance, always

sick when afloat, racked by a terrible cough, tormented with fever and pains, crippled, with one eye and one arm." You recognise the portrait? Possibly not; but it is Horatio, Lord Nelson, the hero of Trafalgar. And suffering has its sweeter uses still. Who among us cannot in a moment call to mind the face of some dear saint who has lain for years on a bed of pain, someone about whom we have not the least hesitation in saying, She has wrought a great work for the Lord? The influence of her life, like the shed fragrance of a broken alabaster box of ointment, has entered many an empty, dreary heart, and filled all its darkened room with hope and joy. But more still. It has often become apparent that it is those who have entered into possession of their souls by the patient endurance of pain, who are precisely the ones for whom God has appointed the holiest tasks in the ampler freedom of the life hereafter.

Once more, there are the lives which to all outward seeming have been failures—men and women who had great hopes and dreams of success, but who have been compelled to confess defeat—beaten down to their knees on

the battle-field of life. Was life worth living for them? A thousand times, yes! It is only when we narrow the soul's vision to this life, protesting that beyond the grave lies nothingness—it is only then that the word "failure" has any meaning. Nay, if this life is not a training-ground, a preparation for an end and goal beyond itself: if for every man it ends in "daisies, dust and dreams," then even over the grave of those who have climbed the highest on the ladder of the world's success must be written that word "failure." For life itself is a failure, a jest, if that is all. But take even this life. Surely the view of James Smetham, the artist who, people said, "had not got on somehow," is the only one that is robust and sane and true. Bravely setting aside the disappointment of outward failure, he writes of himself: "his feet are on a rock; his goings (so far) established, with a new song in his mouth and joy on his head—and 4s. 6d. this blessed moment in his pocket, besides some postage stamps." The man who feels himself beaten at his task has often learned through his ill-success something of the deeper sanctities of life—the glory of loyal human love, the

beauty of meekness, the insight of humility. And it has often happened that the spoiling of a man's first plan has driven the current of his life down a channel that he indeed never dreamed of, but which nevertheless has carried rich blessing to hearts that might have starved but for that first failure. Yes, we believe that when the mists have rolled up from off our finitude we shall find the very tasks we wrought with sobbing breath to be our eternal crown of glory: that even our failures have a holy meaning in God's lasting plan.

There is again the coming of old age. We say our friend is failing when he is past his prime. But when is a man past his prime? Is he too old at forty? Lord Morley wrote the life of Gladstone in three volumes. Is it no inspiration, has it no message for us, to know that Gladstone was over fifty before we enter the second volume? A man may be too old for the more sordid tasks of this material life but old age has no meaning where God's tasks are concerned. The vital fires may begin to sink, and the alertness of the mind to fade, but character never ceases ripening. "Who," says Smetham elsewhere, "would exchange

the quietness of the mind and soul and its increasing light and wisdom for mere spirits ? " And it is character alone that counts in the economy of eternity. It is in the old age of a life well lived that a man begins to enter into the possession of his soul. It is only then that he becomes fit for God's diviner service.

Perhaps the deepest of such mysteries lies in the broken purposes with which the pathways of the world are thickly strewn. Children dying in infancy--little blossoms of promise that never came to fruit : why were they born for just a week or two of pain ? Or young men in the bloom of manhood, full of enthusiasm and dreams, suddenly cut short by death : loose gossamer threads of broken purpose, floating idly on the mocking winds, they seem to our blinded eyes. Is it a thwarting of the Divine plan ? Melancholy fields of crosses—too common, alas, to-day ! Must we write over them, Vanities of vanities ? In God's name, no ! Here on earth these brave, young souls have drawn but a little fragment of the circle of God's plan for them : the rest is shrouded from our eyes. An awful wastage

of life it seems to us; but let us lift our eyes from the gloom, lift them to the glory of eternity that shines through one Life cut tragically short upon a cross. Was there ever a more wanton waste of spiritual wealth than when the world's brute power destroyed the Nazarene? Yet through that life and death we know to-day that God spills not a single golden grain of human promise from His mighty hands. For here God's plan has triumphed through defeat.

Sometimes the purpose of a life on earth may be ended, not by death but by the fading of the intelligence, the clouding of the mind. The soul has half stepped across the threshold of its earthly home, and all the subsequent activity of that mortal clay seems like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh. In some cases it is not wholly inexplicable. We can see that God in His mercy has drawn the veil of a long blank over a soul whose life has been broken by tragic sorrow. But, even in the darkest case, our view of life as a probation-span helps us to say that such souls are not out on the mountains wild and bare. Their life is hid in some recess of God's great heart, resting

in preparation for a new celestial task. Life's purposes broken off ?

> "There shall never be one lost good! What was shall live as before;
> The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
> . . . .
> What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
> On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven a perfect round."

We men and women, then, are souls in the making here. Have we no further glimpse of the goal towards which we are pressing ? Can we tell what it means to win possession of our souls ? We turn to the one completed Soul that ever lived on earth, and there we see what it means. It means being fitted at last to enter into unbroken communion with God—being no longer a blind slave, but a son and co-worker with Him, sharing the knowledge of His holy plan. It means "going on unto perfection" . . . "till we all come . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

V

The Soul and Other Souls

"Love thy neighbour as thyself."—MATT. xxii. 39.
"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."
1 JOHN iii. 15.
"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light."
1 JOHN ii. 10.

"WE are not only gregarious animals liking to be in sight of our fellows," says William James, "but we have a propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably by our kind. No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose on society, and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met 'cut us dead,' and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruellest bodily tortures

would be a relief." If such a treatment were prolonged, it would end in madness and death.

It should be a fruitful line of thought, therefore, to contemplate how dependent our soul is for its very being, yea, from its separateness, its individuality, upon its intercourse with other souls. "Our soul comes to its life by virtue of the brother souls around it." We were each born into a family, a little cluster of souls knit together by the spiritual bond of love. Before your lips learned to lisp the human speech, the vague unformed spirit-life in your infant body had to be coaxed into the beginnings of its soul-life by the power of love. "Alone we should cease to be human. We should know nothing of the world: nothing even of ourselves."

Take the mystery of human speech. What is language but the signs and signals by means of which the thoughts that arise in one soul are passed over into another? To quote again, for all this has been often said, and said well, by others: "One of the first things we learn is to talk, and to listen to talk. And we have been talking and listening on and off ever since. Think of the number of sentences we

have spoken, of the words that have rolled off our tongues since then! A queer retrospect when we come to think of it, and so much in it that is hardly golden. The world is carried on under a babel of utterance." And then this writer imagines himself standing with his ear at a universal telephone, listening to it all—"on the boulevards of Paris, in the cafés of Vienna, on the London Exchange, in the Bazaars of Constantinople; the talk in the drawing-rooms, in the streets, in the palaces of kings, in one-roomed homes—the harvest of one hour would be a literature, a unique human chronicle. There it is, such as it is, going on at this moment. There it is, forming characters, shaping destinies, making happiness and misery, the most tremendous thing in life; and yet the thing of which, in any deep sense, we take the least account."

What does it mean—all this confused murmur of souls flashing signals to other souls? It means that other souls are absolutely necessary to the life of the soul. We have spoken already of the solitariness of the soul. We have now to remind ourselves of the other half of the truth. Without its intercourse with other

souls, the separateness of the soul would be an empty solitude. There would in fact be no soul. We have thought of the soul as

> "A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
> Left on the shore; that hears all night
> The plunging seas draw backward from the land
> Their moon-led waters white."

But now we must stand high up on the beach, beholding not one pool, but millions of pools, laced and linked by millions of tiny rills and channels all over the wet gleaming sands.

We want at this point to emphasise a single truth: the true life of the soul consists in love; and love is the finding of oneself in other souls. And for the purposes of our present theme we may define sin as hatred. And hatred not only leads to murder but it is murder—murder which includes in the end the death of the hate-filled soul. You read your newspaper of a morning. It is choke-full even to nausea of murder and sudden death. But the poison, the bullet, and the knife are not the weapons that presently concern us. We are asking you now to look deeper than the outward physical life. We are asking you to try and think out what Christ meant when He

said that the passion of hate is itself murder. Consider how one soul may drop a poisoned word into another soul, causing it to whither and die. One man—rather, we should say, one animal—may destroy another's bodily life; but think of the countless hidden tragedies which are daily enacted, which are recorded nowhere, unless it be in the newspapers of heaven—tragedies in which souls cripple, and mar, and murder souls. He who uses the language of contempt or, as Christ says, calls his brother *Raca* (fool); he who uses the language of slander—calls his brother *Morê* (scoundrel)—he is a murderer. "Have you never," asks Walter C. Smith, "heard the malignant gossip whispered of someone, '*Raca*—she hath played the fool!' And by and bye she who was but a little ago as blithe and beautiful and healthful as ever gladdened a fireside, now, with pallid cheek and drooping form, withers away into an untimely grave? Was there no law broken by that whispered Raca?" —"Thoughtlessly . . . you take up an ill report against your brother . . . you whisper, '*Morê*—he is acting as a rogue;' you rob him of his good name," until "surrounded

with an atmosphere of misunderstanding, and misrepresentation, and distrust and cruel suspicion . . . life's feeble taper gradually flickers and expires. Again, I ask, is there no law broken there ? "

But is it only other souls we murder thus ? When speaking about other souls the common voices of the soul are these : " I love," " I hate," " I fear." How narrow and contracted is the circle of which the word " I love " is spoken ! How wide and dark is the field of life across which go hissing the baleful words, " I hate," " I fear." And can any of us speak the word " I love " perfectly and without reserve ? The soul was made for union with other souls. But when we sit in the company of our dearest friends, are all our souls laid bare to them ? Are there no secrets that are never revealed—a dark room in the underground of the soul, where we often sit, and always alone, sometimes brooding, sometimes sobbing, alone with our regrets, remorses and despairs ? Ah, that is the solitude that was never designed by God for the soul. That is the solitude made by our worst failures, our ugliest shames. And these are

all, in the last resort, violations of love. The wrongs and cruelties which, wittingly or unwittingly, our lusts and passions have caused us to wreak on the souls of others—these are the things which creep into the spiritual ear of the soul, making a great silence around us, as of death. The selfishness, the love of ease, the aversion from sacrifice—these are the things which creep into the soul's spiritual eyes and blind them, until all round the life of the soul there lies a darkness deep as night. We shudder at the ugliness of Scrooge's soul, in Dickens's story. But are there not times when each of us, in this inner spiritual sense, is a Scrooge? There we sit, in the narrow room of self, behind its darkened walls, peering out through chinks in the shutters, crying "I hate," "I fear!" Such is the isolating veil of reserve which shame forces us to cast around our souls! Such are the shadows, and mists, and glooms of suspicion and estrangement through which we walk alone amid a crowd of souls! That solitude is the shadow of death falling on our own souls.

That is the way of spiritual murder. Because of the touch of impurity, the taint of evil in the heart, we break or mar whatever we

touch in this fair world of ours. We murder the world's beauty for ourselves, we murder the love of friends for us, we murder our own peace, we murder hope, we murder joy. Anger, hate, fear in the heart are the shadows of murder there. And shadows in the heart make all the world a place of gloom.

"Hates the man anything he would not kill?" asks Shylock, in the trial scene in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*; and there is hardly another page in literature where we have so powerful a picture of self-made solitude of soul. It was his own soul that Shylock's hate was killing. The Jewish philosopher Philo says that it was not merely his brother that Cain slew: it was himself.

We are tracing just now the downward progress, the undoing of the soul when it makes its final lapse from love. Love is the life of the soul. We believe it possible to explain every passion of the human soul as a form of love, or the perversion of love. The hatred of Cain for Abel began in envy. Envy is still-born love—love strangled in the heart, ere it had blossomed into life. It is love's look of regard towards its brother, stopped short after

it had travelled but a little way. Envy has a thousand eyes—and is very short-sighted.

Jealousy is the ghost of dead or forgotten love. It is the look of a man towards a brother in whose heart he once had a place. Jealousy too " can never be satisfied with anything short of omniscience." We would fain " detect the subtlest fold of the heart " that once sheltered us; and we become obsessed by delusions.

Suspicion is poisoned love; cynicism, which interprets all goodness in another's life as hypocrisy—attributes all noble deeds to interested motives. Fear is the absence of all love, the demon which displaces charity. Censoriousness, anger, malice, slander, evil-speaking, false witness, revenge—these are the seven devils more wicked than the unclean spirit of fear, which enter and hold high revel in the swept and garnished soul.

Or take a concrete case—the case of Judas. Can you not trace there, painted on the blackest canvas of all the world's immortal pictures, the growing loneliness of soul that ends in death? See how step by step humanity's vilest traitor to love becomes isolated from other

souls. "What thou doest, do quickly," said the Master. And Judas rose from the table, opened the door, and vanished into the blackness of the night—banished from the company of the good. See him waylaying the high priests and rulers as they withdrew from the Sanhedrim on the night of the shameful condemnation. Listen to the hoarse voice, "I have sinned in that I have destroyed innocent blood," and the cold and distant reply of those who had no more use for their miserable tool: "What is that to us? See thou to that." Then the thirty pieces of silver, whose touch was like fire to the wretch, go hurtling along the temple flags, and with a scream he vanishes down the Tyropeum—banished from the company of the bad. Follow him if you can: driven like a hunted thing, fleeing from a black shadow that pursued—his own better self with glaring eyes and accusing finger—yes, banished even from the kindly fellowship of himself. Remorse in his soul—remorse which he could not change to penitence, for above him was only the black sky, like an empty and bottomless socket. He was deserted finally of God—he had murdered his soul. It was

dead even while he sat sobbing and tattered and foul in Aceldama.

But that is not where our imagination wishes to rest. That is only the obverse side of the picture—the result of the soul's disloyalty to other souls. The life of the soul is love, perfect concord and harmony with other souls. Is there any way up out of this abyss of spiritual death into the life of love? Yes, even for an abandoned soul there is a way up. The first and greatest step from spiritual death to life is taken when remorse is changed into penitence. Remorse is the soul alone with its black thoughts, and banished even from God. But the eternal wonder of the Gospel is that God's love breaks through that dark loneliness, in one immortal blaze of sacrifice. What is penitence but love-awakened love—love finding itself in all the sorrow of the broken heart it had wronged—love flinging wide the doors and windows of the soul, and coming forth to stand in confession beneath the Divine Light of forgiving love and holiness. The soul has begun to live again, because it has begun to love. All the world of other souls becomes bathed for it in a new and holy light of

compassion. Love is the giving impulse: it is the identification of self with the life of others. Here is the great paradox of all religion and of all morality: love is the losing of oneself to find oneself in other souls. The more one spends oneself, gives oneself away for other souls, the more one strengthens the life of the soul. It seems absurd, but it has always proved itself true. Whoso loseth his life (in love) shall find it. And all the passions of the soul, which make men great—humility, meekness, mercy, purity, the longing for justice between man and man, the longing for the brotherhood of humanity, the longing for a world flooded with unbroken joy and peace—they are all forms of love which is the life of the soul—the life of the soul which has the love of God beneath it and bending over it. If ours could be a vision of other souls like that of the poet who sang:

"'Tis not because each face, each form
Is comely, for it is not so;
Nor is it that each soul is warm
With any God-like glow.

"Yet, there's no one to whom's not given
Some little lineament of heaven,
Some partial symbol, at the least, in sign,
Of what should be, if it is not, within.

"There was a time, full well I know
When I had not yet seen you so;
Time was when few seemed fair.
But now, as through the streets I go,
There seems no face so shapeless, so
Forlorn but that there's something there
That like the heavens, doth declare
The glory of the great All-fair;
And so mine own each one I call
And so I dare to love you all."

—If ours could be a vision of other souls like that—if we could go forth into the world seeking to be kind, and helpful, and forgiving, and charitable, open, sincere, transparent, seeking the best, believing the best, hoping the best of all men, how the face of the world would be changed! There would be an end of every social problem. Then at last would begin to emerge from this dense tangle of tormented human life the great ideal for which all the world's greatest and best have yearned, the ideal of a perfect society of souls, bound each to each by the law of love.

A beautiful and impossible dream, you say? It is the hope and prophecy of the Gospel. What is the Kingdom of God which Christ preached, and for which He died—but just that, a kingdom of souls linked in a perfect

love ? And it is coming. If behind and in and through all human life there is one great Omnipresent Oversoul, that dream will one day come true. Some of the great thinkers whose minds have been absorbed by the thought of a universe transformed at last into one vast, perfect society of souls, have found no room for a personal God there. Over against that blindness of unbelief, we would place the sublime mysticism of St. John. The very reason for the world's unbelief and doubt of God—the very reason of its questioning cry in face of the great silence of God—is just the loneliness of soul that sin has wrought. But a world of souls transformed into a perfect fellowship of love would be a world so flooded with God's presence that doubt and unbelief would vanish forever over the edge of night. " He that loveth his brother abideth in the light." What does it mean ? " Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God. For *God* —is *Love*."

VI

The Oversoul

"As I live, saith the Lord God . . . behold all souls are Mine."—Ezek. xviii. 4.

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts xvii. 28.

"The Father of spirits."—Heb. xii. 9.

"In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing." Job xii. 10.

It was Emerson who coined the impressive name for God—the Oversoul. It has been the lot of many of us, I fancy, to have listened sometime or other, to a great orator addressing a vast concourse of people. You may have watched the sea of upturned faces, the rapt gaze of each upon the speaker's face and gestures, as they followed the silver thread of his argument, the lips of many of them moving as if to frame the words that dropped from his lips. You may have observed how he swayed them as if with a magic spell, how the sudden glory of laughter leapt from them like light, beneath the keen, bright

strokes of his irony and wit; you may have seen the tears start when he touched the chord of pathos; you may have listened to the roar of anger that came from thousands of responsive throats when his words were winged with noble passion; to the scorn that echoed his scorn, or to the tumult of rapturous applause that greeted some soaring thought that came, thrilling the heart and catching the breath, opening a vista into the Unseen, a far-stretching landscape envisaged from some mountain height.

If in such a moment you could have been endowed with a spiritual microscope, enabling you to look into the souls of the crowd, you would have seen a thousand agitated pools of thought, each one answering wave for wave, to the spiritual commotion of the burning soul of the speaker. For the time being, his soul is, so to speak, an oversoul, holding all that multitude of souls within his thrall.

That picture is a dim and far-off shadow of the relation of all the souls of men to the Soul of God—the Oversoul. The soul of every human being that you meet on the street is a cluster of spiritual ideas and activities that has

somehow thrilled into life at the touch of the spiritual energy of the one Omnipresent Soul in whom "we live and move and have our being." Every human life that goes its way, restless or tranquil, rejoicing or sorrowing, through three score years and ten—more or less—might be described as a long thread of deeds, thoughts, feelings, words, and silences, spun by a single human soul across that span of time; and the great web of human souls, intimately related as they are with each other, form, as it were, part of the life of the Infinite Oversoul. Your soul and mine are simply thoughts of God translated into life, and held in being by the Divine Will. Your sins and mine are transmuted into throbs of the agony of the One boundless heart of Love.

You look out on all this vast universe of space and time. In some sense it is true that just as our bodies are the living garments with which our souls clothe themselves, so the visible creation is, as Goethe called it, "the living garment of God." But it is still more true that "neither stars nor sea nor smiling nature hold God so intimately as does the human soul." God is the Soul of every soul.

I do not forget that Emerson's doctrine led him into an exaggerated and impossible Pantheism. But let not that blind us to its central truth. It echoes again through the sublime thinking of the Apostle Paul: "Of Him are all things created, and through Him and to Him are all things." "In Him are all things created, and we in Him." And St. Paul but answers back to this voice of ancient prophecy, which spoke for God five hundred years before: "All souls are mine, saith the Lord."

And now some one may say, "Surely you are rushing too swiftly to conclusions. My soul recognised and understood the orator when he swayed the multitude. My soul was in perfect *rapport* with his. But where is the infinite Oversoul? 'No man hath seen God at any time.' Is it true that

'Spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet'?"

It is to endeavour to discover some fragments of the answer to that question which is half a sigh, some hints or gleams of truth that go to show that the human soul can and does enter into intercourse with the Divine Oversoul, that I ask you to help me, in this chapter, again to

cross-question our souls. And remember that we are questioning the soul now, not so much in its isolation and loneliness, but as we find it in the society of other souls. I bend my ear to listen to the murmur that rises from the ranks of the numberless host of humanity as it stretches its line down the road of history from the mist-wrapped horizon of the past. And I am bound to report that the general opinion of mankind, in all lands and in all ages, echoes the deep, instinctive conviction that "there is a God." That is the unanimous testimony of the anthropologists even about the obscurest tribe in the remotest islands of the sea. Wherever there has been a race possessing even the rudiments of a human soul, its deepest and most obstinate instinct, as it looks out on the world around it, has been this sense of a great tide of spirit life, unseen yet ever active, surging round it, pressing in on it, compelling it to take up an attitude of awe, fear, reverence towards it. Do you say that religion is just barbarous superstition born of ignorance, slowly withering before the advancing light of knowledge, until to-day we are watching its death-throes? The truth is that the human instinct for God

has only grown deeper and stronger and purer with the passing centuries. It has shed off most of the superstitions that clung like weeds around it. And instead of a dark, confused, chaotic, unseen world of many spirits, there has emerged the thought of one Omnipresent God, before whom men no longer prostrate themselves in cringing fear, but in adoring love. So completely has this conviction taken possession of the world, that men are saying that the time is ripe for a universal religion—a common creed which declares :

"That God is one, that men are one, that faith is ever the same,
That love is still the nearest word that speaks the nameless Name."

Yes, even the cynical man of the world who has grown weary of believing—and there has always been a small minority of such in every age—even he possesses this feeling in the shape of a doubt, a wonder, a sense of dissatisfaction and discontent. Listen to him. He says, "Our little, fleeting, human life is a grey and mean and worthless thing." How did he find that out—how does he know? What is his standard of judgment? According to his own account human civilisation is the best

thing the clash of material forces has yet produced. What secret better thing does he know of, against which he measures it and calls it mean and worthless? Does not his very speech betray the Divine discontent—the instinct of his heart that there is some higher spiritual life, of which this our human life falls miserably short? Hundreds of atheisms and materialisms have shouted to men, "Banish the name of God, extirpate the *feeling* of God from your souls." "They might as well," says Francis Newman, "attempt to forbid the sense of infinity as we look up into the midnight sky, or of eternity as we gaze on the everlasting mountains." No—those voices of the soul refuse to be suppressed. Ever anew they break forth in us crying, "My soul is haunted with the sense of the presence of God. God is. God is one—the all-pervading Oversoul. God is my true Home. I seek for God. I thirst for God—thirst for more intimate communion than I now enjoy. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him—that I might come even to His seat. . . . I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto

me.—Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our soul is restless till it find its true rest in Thee."

But when I proceed now further to question the human soul, I find that it leads me far beyond this familiar thought, and it makes another more exciting and more daring assertion. For I turn to where I find this sense of God most intense among mankind, and I hear the Soul reporting this strange conviction: "God, the Oversoul, *is* seeking to commune with me!"

On the pages of a remarkable book entitled, *An Agnostic's Progress*, there is this striking sentence describing the end of the author's struggle for light: "When I lifted up my eyes to God, I found God not only looking through my eyes but *into* them." . . . God is seeking to enter into communion with us, and it is only after a long search that we begin dimly to understand His signals to us.

Many of you are no doubt familiar with a winsome little picture, in which a young child, squatting down on hands and knees, looks longingly into the handsome face of a collie dog. "Speak!" the little one is saying to

his dumb friend, while the dog, with ears and eyes alert, betrays a pathetic anxiety to understand. Small as the child's world is as yet, it nevertheless covers a wide landscape of thought, compared with that of the dog. And all that childish world of thought and fancy he is anxious to share with his dumb companion. The dog listens, hears the sounds, but grasps only a fragment of the secrets that the child would fain tell. What the child is to the dog, that is God, the great Oversoul, to the soul of man. The dog is sure of the love and friendship of his master, sure of the meaning of a few of the simpler sounds and gestures, sure that his master is longing to teach him more if only he could waken up to comprehend.—So it is between us men and God. Wherever you find the human soul at its highest, you will find it reporting this—that the great Oversoul, the Spirit of the Universe, is friendly, and anxious to communicate his thoughts to men. What, for example, do scientists like Newton, Kelvin, Helmholz, Russel Wallace, tell us? When they come back to report upon the adventures of their scientific search, they tell us not only that the laws of nature are like so

many thoughts of God written over the face of earth and sky, *prepared* and waiting for our minds to grasp them, but even that this great Nature seems *eager* to be known. They tell us that their highest discoveries have nearly always come to them, not so much as the last step in a long chain of reasoning, but as flashes of intuition in which the soul seems to lie passive to receive. Of one of his brilliant discoveries Helmholz said, "It was given to me." Is that a delusion? Were these discoveries nothing more than daring guesses to which these great minds had leaped in some moment of intellectual emotion? Was there no Infinite Mind striving to help them to the treasure they had long been begging Nature to disclose? I recently heard of a naval officer who could be wakened from his sleep by one word only, however lightly whispered, and that word was "signal." No doubt that was the result of long discipline. But without another mind awake, whispering the message, he could not have been roused, though a whole navy were signalling to him. It is so in the vaster world of the great seekers after Nature's truth. Surely their own testimony is true.

These discoveries came to them as messages thrust down into their minds, from some Infinite Mind. And thus is Nature, God's handmaid, ever whispering her mysteries to the soul of man. Just as the meteors, wandering beyond the earth's atmosphere, only become visible objects to the eye, when they become incandescent by impingeing upon that atmosphere, so the hidden forces of Nature, the vast secrets of the treasure-house of the Eternal Mind, only become mentally incandescent when they break into consciousness, as it were, and pass across some outstretching fringe of it. Take, for example, the great discovery of electric power. There is nothing new about it. Man did not create it. It has always been about us, playing through the sky, and *inviting* the mind of man. Then some day a few men open their minds to the significance of the force. The law of its working pours down into their minds along the freshly opened avenue of thought. They understand it, and so are able to harness it, and bend it to the will of man. "And one of the most impressive things about science to-day," says an American teacher, "is to consider how many other secrets of the

universe are at this moment knocking at the door of the human mind, and waiting to be let in; and to perceive how senseless and unreceptive we must seem to an omniscient Mind, when so much truth standing near us is being beaten back from our closed minds and wills."

Yes, God, the Oversoul, is calling through many voices of Nature, calling to the soul of man to listen and understand. And the scientist—as he puts forth all his faculties to listen: as he observes, classifies, contrasts, compares, infers—finds his mind being gradually e-*duc*-ated—drawn up—to a higher level of receptiveness, until at last some new secret of Nature, and of Nature's God, finds an avenue of consciousness into which it breaks, and along which it breathes its meaning.

Ask the poet, the artist, the musician again, as they too repeat this same conviction: "God is eagerly seeking to commune with me." Art, says one of our present-day poets (and by Art he is no doubt thinking of his own art in particular—all the Divine Truth spoken to the world in noble poetry), Art is

"Nature's reminiscences of travel
Across an artist's soul."

Nay, what lover of the beautiful does not say the same thing? Who, that has listened to one of the great transcripts of Nature's harmonies —some symphony of Beethoven, say; who, that has watched an autumn sunset pouring its golden splendour over the many-tinted glory of the earth, has not felt a responsive thrill rush through his soul, as if some Divine, personal Being, anxious to be familiar, intimate, were making a wistful appeal to him, like the longing of a soul looking out through fair eyes, eager to lift him out of the cramping fetters of his finitude and speak with him heart to heart? Shall we then deny the poet's claim when he says he "discerns through the lamp Beauty the light God?" Shall we not rather say, as we face the great silences of God—not that God is not eager to speak with us; but that we in our finitude are as yet uncompleted souls, not fit for that full communion for which the Oversoul is longing? We sit in His vast audience chamber where the Divine Speaker forever utters His golden thoughts in the sweetness of flowers and the wonder of stars, yet our dull minds only catch glimpses of the meaning of the story that He tells. All

the love and longing of His heart is poured around us, seeking as mother-love seeks to wake the infant's intelligence, to draw out the powers of our souls; enticing us to seek for Him, and, by seeking, to make ourselves worthy to find Him.

But now I ask you to take still one more step with me, and to listen to one more declaration of the human soul about the Oversoul to whom it belongs. Let us pass away from that room in the soul where *Reason* dwells, and away from that other room where the *Sense of the Sublime and the Beautiful* dwells; and enter that far more wonderful room where *Conscience* and the *Inner Light* dwell. What do they tell us about the Oversoul? Ask the great mystics and prophets of mankind. For thousands of years these great beacon-lights of history, these mountain peaks of humanity, standing up into the stainless sunrise of God's living Presence, have shouted their message down into every gloomy valley, "God is good and loving: God cares—intensely cares for every separate soul." Nay, they tell us, "God is not only seeking to get into communion with men, but He *has* spoken—spoken His authentic word to

us, His prophets and holy men. And He has bidden us, with all the anguished longing of His heart, to tell His message to men."

"How did they know," you ask, "that it was an authentic word from God?" You remember the hour when some high and holy truth flashed into your soul with a blinding light? Were you able to say anything more about its coming except this?—"The thing shines by its own light: it took possession of me with a thrill, a rush, a glow. The heart leapt up to meet it with a glad consenting. I know—I know that it is true." That experience of yours, that thrill of the soul assenting to the self-revealing light of truth, is akin to the intuitions of Socrates, the conversion and ecstasies of St. Paul, the *aura* of Jacob Boehme, the raptures of George Fox, the illumination of Swedenborg, and of the nobler mystics. Listen to the great prophets crying "Thus saith the Lord." To what witness do they make their appeal regarding the authority of their high and awful claim to speak for God? Simply to the conscience of their hearers. "Hearken to the word!" they say; "let the truth of it sink in, and

grip, and shake your soul, and then let your conscience, let that inward light of your souls, deny, if it can, that the word spoken is a veritable oracle of Jehovah."

Nay, listen further to that note of inward stress and compulsion that rings in the voices of the prophets, as though they had wrestled hard against another Will ere they were compelled to speak. Listen to Amos crying: "The Lord hath spoken; can His prophets refuse to declare His word?" Or to Jeremiah, lying like a wild beast that has been tamed and broken beneath the hand of God—saying, "Thy word was as a fire in my bones: I was weary with holding in; verily Thou, O Lord, wert stronger than I, and hast prevailed." Or to St. Paul confessing: "Necessity is laid upon me, yea woe is unto me if I declare not God's good news."

Were these men deceived about the voice of God within their souls? Are conscience and the Inner Light simply symptoms of spiritual disease—the hallucinations of morbid and abnormal souls? Once again Jesus Christ is the answer to that. He is the one supreme instance in all history of a soul so completely

absorbed by the Presence of God—a soul dwelling in such perfect and unbroken communion with His Heavenly Father—that the shadow of doubt was utterly impossible: it never occurred to Him to offer any proof of God's existence. He could no more deny His Presence than He could deny the existence of the air He breathed through His lungs, or the sunlight that danced on the blue waters of the Galilean Lake in summer. And when He spoke, the words flowed like a draught of eternal life from His lips. And His message—the pure and simple essence of His message was just this: "Your Heavenly Father cares. Not a sparrow falls without your Heavenly Father. The hairs of your head are all numbered." Was it all a delusion—simply a disease of mind? Let His holy life of love be the test! Call His certainty of constant communion with God a mere hallucination of a mind diseased if you will;—if it resulted in a character of such majestic moral purity and beauty, then the sooner all mankind is infected with the disease the better! And if there is a sceptic who dares to say that the loftiest moral attainment the world has ever seen was the result of a

pathetic delusion, then let him honestly accept the consequences of his position, and let him deny the reality and worth of all the virtues, let him doubt the very foundations on which the world is built.

In that strange but suggestive fantasia of G. K. Chesterton's, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, the writer depicts a man who conceived life to be one huge joke, suddenly raised by the cast of a dice to the throne of England. And he describes another, whom this hare-brained king chooses to be provost of one of his whimsical divisions of London—a man so devoid of the sense of humour that he takes the whole wild mummery of ancient chivalry—the elaborate practical joke which the king insists on—seriously. He becomes a flaming fanatic, and by his daring successes against the other boroughs of London, whose councillors treat the whole thing as nonsense, he by-and-by infects his own borough with the contagion of his enthusiasm for the cause. He becomes a danger to the throne; and a great battle is fought between the king, the incarnation of laughter, and this fanatic provost, the incarnation of seriousness. Night falls on a scene

of chaos—a stricken field covered with multitudes of slain and wounded. Out of the silence two voices begin to speak. "Suppose I am God," said one of the voices—that of the king—"and suppose I made the world in idleness. Suppose the stars that you think eternal are only the idiot fireworks of an everlasting schoolboy . . . Suppose Socrates and Charlemagne are to me only beasts made funnier by walking on their hind legs. Suppose I am God, and having made things, laugh at them." "And suppose I am man," replied the other. "And suppose I give the answer which shatters even a laugh. Suppose I do not laugh back at you, do not blaspheme you, do not curse you. But suppose, standing straight up under the sky, with every power of my being I thank you for the fool's paradise you have made. Suppose I praise you with a literal pain of ecstasy for the jest that has brought me so terrible a joy. If we have taken the child's games, and given them the seriousness of a Crusade, if we have drenched your grotesque Dutch garden with the blood of martyrs, we have turned your nursery into a temple. I ask you in the name of Heaven, who wins?"

With all its grotesquerie, that is an eloquent and convincing plea for the ultimate reality of moral values. Apply it in all reverence to the situation before us. If Christ took Himself so seriously that He defied the Cross in the name of the Infinite Purpose to which He devoted His life: and if the contagion of this Enthusiast of humanity is still spreading over the world, and men everywhere are falling down and worshipping Him, then His existence cannot have been a mere freak of nature, made by brainless demons in mockery and laughter. The moral result of His life and death justifies to the hilt His claim to have indeed heard the authentic voice of the Infinite Personal Spirit behind the universe, the Oversoul, the Heavenly Father. His life is the one perfect, moral and spiritual reality of which we can be supremely certain. And God, His Father, was the one reality of which He was supremely sure. Yes, there in the centre of human history, God's heart looked out at last through human eyes, into the wistful faces of seeking men. There, at the Cross on Calvary, the Light of God's eternal love glowed out through all the veil of nature, and all the wilderness of human

sin. There, in those outstretched arms, the old word of the prophet spoke again, crying, "All souls are mine . . . I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth . . . Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

VII

The Soul's House of Earthly Sojourn

"This tabernacle."—2 Cor. v. 4.
"Your bodies are members of Christ."—1 Cor. vi. 15.
"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."
1 Cor. vi. 19.

"Soul and body" is a familiar phrase on human lips. One of the deepest and most enduring problems of thought has been to determine the relation between the two. Commonsense, of course, dogmatically asserts that when our body goes a journey in the train to London our soul goes with it; for our minds and wills do not extend beyond the surface of our skins. We are bewildered when the philosopher tells us it is wrong to talk of spiritual realities, of the human soul, as occupying so many cubic inches in space. Your attention was caught by some bright planet in the evening sky last night. In so far as you recognised it to be a world like this earth, that star, millions of miles

away, was within your mind. For when you saw it, what had happened was that a long shaft of light, a vibration or ripple of the upper ether, smote with its millions of tiny waves against the surface of your optic nerve. Then it passed a message along the nerve, which registered itself in your brain, being transformed by some mysterious alchemy into the sensation of light. But something else happened when the message arrived. The mind did not say: "I am conscious that some ether vibrations are stimulating my optic nerve just now." The thought that leapt into life was this: "I recognise out there in the infinite void another world like this on which my body stands just now." That does not mean you had a thought which stretched from here to the star. Your thought was not in space at all. It would be far truer to say that space was in your mind. It sounds like March madness. It is quite impossible for us to form any kind of picture of a thing that does not occupy space, because space is the very condition that makes a picture possible to us. But the very bewilderment which all this creates in our mind ought to convince us that there is a problem, a

far-reaching problem, concerning the relation of mind and matter, soul and body. It is a problem indeed which has occupied a long line of the world's greatest intellects, the strenuous thinking of a lifetime.

Here we can only talk in pictures, and we must remember that they are but faint shadows of the truth.

We are growing familiar in these days with the wonders of wireless telegraphy. If you visit any of our battleships you will see spread out between the mast-heads an arrangement of wires which are connected with a little operating room somewhere between decks. Two of these ships put out from different ports to sea; they are many miles apart—out of sight of each other, apparently out of all contact with each other. Yet one operator touches the keys of his instrument, sends little throbs of electric force pulsing up on to these wires, and then out into space. They are caught by the receiving wires of the other vessel, and the operator there, with the receiving instrument strapped to his ears, listens to the throbs, and reads the message off. Thirty years ago men would have said it was a miracle, an impossible

dream. Yet the human intellect has invented this instrument so sensitive that it can control and respond to the movements of a mighty force which pervades all nature.

The human body is just such an instrument, only millions of times more sensitive, an instrument which acts on, and is controlled by, the human mind—the soul. The intellect of man, great as it is, has never been able, and never will be able, to devise an instrument like the eye which can translate invisible waves of ether into light, or like the ear which can translate air waves into sound. The mystery of telepathy is not yet understood, but the fact, that thought can be transmitted across long spaces is well established. More familiar is the magnetic spell of a great personality over a crowd, conveyed by the looks and gestures of the body—the thrall of Christ's glance, for instance, over an angry mob. These things suggest that the influence of the soul extends far beyond the confines of the body. The comet trailing across the midnight suggests an imperfect picture. The body might be compared to the sharp bright head, while the soul and its influence might be compared to the

nimbus round the head and the long luminous train spreading out fan-like into the infinite abyss of space. The soul is a mighty ray of spirit force that comes pulsing out of the life of the Infinite Spirit, who is the Home and Soul of every soul. The body is the creation of spirit—a focal centre upon which a wonderful system of spiritual forces cluster and converge, in order that, by waking up to know itself in that centre, as separate from the Mind-life of the universe, and by undergoing a human experience, it might shape itself at length into an immortal personality.

This is the first great religious thought about the body: it is the instrument by which the soul comes into possession of the outer world of nature. Recall the fairest scene in nature known to you. Place yourself in memory there —the dark and solemn crags brooding over some unutterable secret they will never tell; the wind chanting a litany in the cathedral aisles of the sombre forest of pines; the bird's liquid song like an angelic solo floating on the breeze; the vesper hymn of the river winding its way amid the green and brown and purple glory, reflecting back the tender light of the

dying day. The soul is drawn out of itself to melt and mingle and become one with that beauty and splendour, to lose itself in adoring rapture. All the joy of living in such a world, and receiving that holy gift from God, becomes the soul's possession, because the heart has been opened through the bodily senses to those pure delights which are its right and heritage.

"This tabernacle," the apostle Paul has named the body. But he is quite conscious of the inadequacy of calling it merely that. And after other noble efforts to describe it, he names it at last "the temple of the Holy Ghost"—the home of the divine indwelling Spirit who is the source and the life and the companion of the soul. Our concern here is not with the spirit but with the temple; and we pass in reverently from the outer courts. You get some idea of the majesty of a cathedral by contrasting it with the little homes that cluster round it. Take any of the simpler living things of nature and compare them with the human body. The scientist tells us that "the simplest organism we know is far more complex than the constitution of the

United States of America." "The brain of an ant," said Darwin, "is perhaps the most marvellous speck of matter in the universe." And Professor J. Arthur Thomson suggests that "in a tiny organism no larger than an ordinary minute hand on a dainty watch, there is an . . . intricacy which might be represented by an Atlantic liner packed with such watches." What then must it be in the case of the human body? I remember once being taken through Woolwich Arsenal and very speedily becoming bewildered by the amazing network of machinery—the endless mechanical devices for doing work of the most delicate and difficult kind—until for the moment I forgot the awful end for which they were working, the destruction of countless living temples of the Holy Spirit—forgot it in sheer astonishment and wonder. I felt myself standing in the midst of a vast and gloomy temple, dedicated to human intellect and genius, enriched and glorified by its presence. But we might say without any exaggeration of Prof. Thomson's thought, that the human body in its million-fold complexities might be compared to all the various kinds of machinery employed in all the

factories of the United Kingdom packed beneath a single roof and working together for a common end. Nay, that is an utterly inadequate comparison. It is said that "the human brain is such an intricate labyrinth of nerve-paths that it takes years for the student to become even superficially acquainted with it." It is infinitely more complicated than all the teeming traffic ways of London. The scientific truth about the body is stranger far than the most incredible fiction. It may waken incredulity in the mind at first, but that unbelief ought soon to melt into adoring reverence before the incomprehensible wisdom of God, the Divine Artificer.

The poets stand to worship in the temple of nature's beauty. Walt Whitman declares the blade of grass more wonderful than the journeywork of the stars. Tennyson believes the little lichen which he has plucked from the wall contains the whole mystery of God and man. But here is a temple, a living temple where the soul of man may well bow down to adore the Divine Creator. A temple? Nay, a miniature world of mystery and wonder where God's glory dwells more full than in the blazing

light of day, His tenderness more intimate than in the lilies of the field.

There is a well-known poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes entitled "The Living Temple," in which he has sought to depict that untold wealth of organic machinery moving in the rhythmic harmony of a single life, a single purpose. The body breathes—and it is as though a tide from the great, invisible ocean of the atmosphere had flowed in among the multitudinous, tiny caves within the breast, refreshing the bright, red streams that rush through these hidden recesses, and cleansing away with its ebb their burden of decay. The heart beats—beats normally without an instant's rest—from the hour of birth to the day of death, driving those unnumbered crossing tides of crimson through all the woven network of the arteries and veins, rebuilding the wasting tissue of the flesh. Or one thinks again of the amazing balance of muscle and nerve along which sensation and impulse flash and reflash like messages, enabling one to move through space; and yet once more of the five gates and windows of the senses through which the eternity of space and time looks in on the

eternity of thought and feeling—light and beauty, music and fragrance, waking the hushed spirit till it looks out again in love, and wonder, and longing—deep calling unto deep. Think, too, of the mysterious folds of the brain, where sensation is translated into thought by the soul, and from whence the soul flashes forth the dictates of its will.

> "Think on the stormy world that dwells
> Locked in its dim and clustering cells!
> The lightning gleam of power it sheds
> Along its slender glassy threads!"

How should the soul despise such an habitation? It is not too mean a temple for the Holy Spirit's dwelling.

Nay, the second great truth which the Christian faith maintains about the body is that the soul's connection with it here on earth is neither an accident nor a punishment. The body is not the soul's prison house, as Plato suggested; neither is it a clog, a drag upon the spiritual life, and the seat of all that is sinful. It is not an excrescence, as some have thought. It has been the chief incentive to human progress.

"To man propose this test,
Thy body at the best
How far can it project thy soul on its lone way?
. . . . .
Let us not always say
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'"

Created by the age-long travail of Spirit for spirit, the body is the vehicle, the essential instrument by which the soul lives its life below. And it is the sacred duty of the soul to see that the walls of this temple are preserved and consecrated; that no unhallowed sacrifices burn upon the altar of the heart.

For the body has its duties as well as its rights. Revelation does not teach that the flesh is essentially evil and the source of sin. Every natural function of the body has its holy service to fulfil in the economy of human life. But the inspired Word does teach that it is the flesh that presents the soul with the opportunity of choice between good and evil. The shaping of the soul for immortality is just another way of expressing the moral conflict,

between passion on the one hand and conscience and reason on the other, that is always going on within us. We may either respond to the call of the higher Divine life that has been breathed into us, and so mould the natural instincts and impulses into forces and instruments for service and self-sacrifice, or we may let these drag us down to earth again, and destroy us, flesh and spirit together. When the passions seat themselves on the throne of the Will there is sin, the desecration of the temple of the Holy Spirit, the making of the .instincts given for our preservation into instruments of destruction.

St. Paul has expressed this solemn and searching truth in a profound and striking picture. Just as our hands and feet, our eyes and ears and lips are members of our body, even so our body is in turn a member of a holier Body still, the mystical Body of Christ, the beloved Community of the faithful, in which the soul of the risen Christ now dwells. When any member of our bodies becomes incapable of doing its work the whole body is enfeebled and sick unto death. When any member of the Body of Christ refuses to fulfil its sacred

task and destiny the whole Body is injured and suffers. And then, as if to drive his message home, the apostle flings down his passionate cry, "You are not your own, you were bought with a price." In the great body of human society, hindering and injuring its life for the purposes of God, you were the withered arm Christ healed, you were the palsied limb He restored, you were the dead and atrophied member whom He warmed with life and grafted to His own sacred Body again. Self-will has no more rights in us for whom Christ paid the priceless treasure of His life. He bought us, soul and body together, with His blood. Speaking to a dear work-worn saint some time ago about certain dead bodies whose last resting-place had been accidentally disturbed, I ventured, thoughtlessly perhaps, to say, "In a sense it does not matter much what happens to the dust that crumbles in the grave." "Nevertheless," was the grave reply, "they are the instruments which we have used or misused in the Master's service." Yes, there is a note of judgment in the Apostle's passionate cry, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive

from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God!"

We have not spoken of the pain, the weakness, the disease, that rack the human frame. A single word must suffice. From the point of view of religion, pains and diseases may be grouped into two great classes, those which are the result of sin and folly, and those which remind us that this God-given temple of the human soul is still unfinished, imperfect, and contains a perishable part which must decay. This is what St. Paul means when he calls the body "a tent"—the soul's moving tent, something which can be folded up in the night-time, and at daybreak it is vanished away. "Therefore we that are in this tent do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

"O Father, grant Thy love divine
To make these mystic temples Thine!
When wasting age and wearying strife
Have sapped the leaning walls of life,
When darkness gathers over all,
And the last tottering pillars fall,
Take the poor dust Thy mercy warms
And mould it into heavenly forms."

VIII

Whither Goes the Soul?

"If a man die shall he live again?"—Job xiv. 14.

"God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."—Mark xii. 27.

"I shall be satisfied when I awake . . ."
Psalm xvii. 15.

What does it mean to die? One of the greatest of living French writers has penned a vivid picture of a soldier dying in the desert, stabbed by Arab spears. With a minute and a terrible realism he describes the passing thoughts and feelings of the wounded man: pictures of home, memories of old friends, frenzies of thirst and fever, a roaring in the ears, flashings and whirlings in the eyes—of light and colour, and then . . . a body left to be gnawed by the vultures, a naked skull rolled over and over by the desert winds.

More quietly but with greater power, Shakespeare has depicted its dread solemnity,

when Hamlet muses in the churchyard, with the skull of the king's jester in his hand:

"Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chapfallen!"

And in another drama of his we have the famous lines:

"Death is a fearful thing—
To die, and go, we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit

. . . . .

To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; . . .
'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

No one has ever looked on the face of death without being confronted with the great question, Whither has the soul fled? An hour before, perhaps, your friend was talking to you, the mind as alert as ever, recalling old

memories with abnormal clearness, speaking a love that did but beat the stronger in the face of the coming change, thoughtful for absent ones, and clinging bravely to the hope that beyond the darkness love's story may be resumed again. And then—the great silence, and the cold clay, so unresponsive to your questions and your tears. The spirit's presence has withdrawn forever from its earthly temple. And soon the casket of the flesh will crumble into dust, and mingle with the earth its mother.

What has happened? Has the mind that planned for the body, the love that thrilled it, the will that guided and controlled it, simply been extinguished like a candle-flame? Does it find no place ever any more within God's universe? Has everything that gave the body worth and greatness vanished from existence, leaving in the void not even a vapoury stain? Does the body now show itself to be the more enduring part of man, lingering on for a little while intact beyond the hour of death? Nay, does the material part of man, according to the law of the conservation of energy, possess, in some sense, an abiding reality, while the thoughts, deeds, emotions

of dead generations, which constitute the sublime record of history, pass from existence, retaining only a pale and flickering life in the old and overburdened memory of this mortal race of ours? Shall we—the thinking Something which, in each of us, is asking the dread question at this moment—shall we too pass out of all existence when for each of us the fateful hour arrives?

"Ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,
And while the purple joy is passed about,
Whether 'tis ampler day divinelier lit,
Or homeless night without?

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see
New prospects, or fall sheer, a blinded thing!
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,
And there, O death, thy sting."

We can only touch on the merest fragment of the vast volume of thought which has been built up round this question of immortality. We have already laid down the main lines which lead to an affirmative conclusion to Job's question, If a man die shall he live again? We were at the starting-point when we listened to the soul saying, "I wonder, I long, I aspire." And here let it be noted once again that the very fact that the questioning fear we have

just been repeating ever arises in the soul, betrays the infinite longing of the human heart in what is its deepest and most persistent form—the yearning for immortality.

Widespread as the human race is this desire. Purer and stronger has it grown with the passing centuries. And it is not the mean minds among mankind, but all the world's greatest and noblest, upon whose lips it has uttered itself with the surest notes of hope. You read the Egyptian Book of the Dead, as it speaks to us across six thousand years of time. You sit at the feet of Plato, and watch his keen intellect applied to the subject. You listen to the eloquence of Cicero discoursing upon it. You read the sentences of Emerson, as they glow and sparkle about the theme. You are lifted up by the grand strains of the poets—Dante, Goethe, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning. And above them all you hear the ringing note of Jesus of Nazareth, Master of life. They are all convinced about the soul's immortality. Is it the great delusion of the noble-minded? "I admit," says Emerson, "that you will find a good deal of scepticism in the streets, and hotels, and places of coarse amusement. But

that is only to say that the practical faculties are faster developed than the spiritual. Wherever there is depravity, there is the slaughter-house style of thinking," No materialist who, living a pure life, has been nobler than his creed, has ever disowned the existence of this desire. When he has tried to drag the hope up by the roots from the soul, it has cost him pain and sadness. And wherever you find a man disclaiming the desire for more than the life allotted to him here, even that pathetic protest betrays the same yearning. For it is not human life at its smallest and meanest and pettiest that any of us want prolonged.

> " Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No soul that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly longed for death.
>
> 'Tis life, whereof our veins are scant—
> O life, not death, for which we pant—
> More life and fuller that we want."

If this passing world of time is simply the training ground and nursery for souls, if the whole meaning and purpose of life is soul-making, can it be possible that the long travail of evolution has been slowly building up this thing of Divine value, only to show it the

far-off goal of completed individuality which it is never destined to enter; only to let its infinite labour be frustrated by death? Here on earth the human soul never reaches the summit of its aspiration. "Within the whole range of the wide world's literature we find no more constant theme than this disparity between man's possibilities and aspirations on the one hand, and the narrow scope afforded them in the brief space of the present life, on the other." Can it really be held that this desire for immortality is simply the voice of selfishness and barren egoism, which will die out of the human soul as the race grows nobler? That is to misunderstand the very point of our claim. So far from saying that a noble earthly life is not worth having without immortality, we put our claim the other way about: immortality is a reasonable inference, because a noble earthly life has an intrinsic and abiding worth of its own.

The soul claims immortality, not in exchange for the poverty of its equipment, and its ideals and plans here, but because already it is so great, so shot through with gleams of heavenly splendour, that if its destiny were nothingness,

the universe itself would be a futility and a lie. Can it be likely that, in man alone among living creatures, instincts and desires arise, which it is not right to satisfy, and which in fact are not satisfied? As one writer puts it, "Are the instincts which work with such accuracy in the animal kingdom all at sea when man is their subject? Are they right when they urge the migrating swallow on its pathless way, when they make the squirrel prepare for winter scarcity of food, and all wrong when they urge man to ideal conduct based on the sense of a life beyond?"

That is the human ground from which we bid you to make the leap of faith. As soon as we begin to ask ourselves what more does this cry of the soul for more life and fuller mean, we find ourselves carried at once right to the heights of the supreme argument for immortality. It is the crowning argument of religion. It is the cry of all the Psalms that sing of immortality, and all the prophets that proclaim it. It is the ground on which Christ sought to base His people's faith in a life beyond. It is the cry of the soul's faith in God, the Oversoul whose love and care and

justice it has experienced here. "Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy one," says the poet of the sixteenth Psalm (and the word for "holy one" has a very definite meaning in the Old Testament; it is the man between whom and God a covenant of mutual loyalty has been sworn)—"Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy one to see corruption," sings this ancient man of faith. "Thou wilt not suffer me with whom Thou hast sworn an oath of friendship here below, to drop from Thy sight forever in death." That is the religious ground from which we make the leap of faith. It is to those who believe in the existence of God that we appeal. We assume the existence of the indwelling and overarching starry Presence, the Oversoul.

And we listen first to the voice of faith as it speaks in *Conscience*. We ask conscience the meaning of the soul's desire for immortality, and conscience says it is a cry for the vindication of the Divine Justice. Is that the voice of selfishness? Is it selfish to affirm that the God we have known in mercy cannot be a God of cruelty and caprice? Is it selfish to ask with faithful Abraham, Shall not the God of all the earth do right? And when we look

abroad upon human life, so full of anomalies and evils, of brokenness and loss, surely it is not selfish to expect that a just God must vindicate His character! For the sake of little children who never got a right chance here, because they were doomed into existence amid the haunts of depravity and shame; for the sake of lives fated from the cradle to drag out a lingering existence under a hereditary legacy of wasting disease; for the sake of souls who, through some flaw in the delicate mechanism of the brain, have been forced to haunt an imperfect body, vainly seeking in mental weakness to come to their own here on earth; for the sake of lives that have been broken by the repeated blows of cruel circumstance; for the sake of lives cut short in mid career by unforeseen disaster—plague or famine, volcano or earthquake, or the treachery of the sea; and—worse than all these things—for the sake of lives flung into the devouring maw of war, with its lust and greed and passion—sin's awful injustices for which there can be no earthly reparation—for all these the soul cries out to God for a fresh chance somewhere. Can these apparent failures, mistakes, and

futilities of life be such in God's eyes? Can God be a partaker with mankind in thus casting souls as rubbish to the void? Nay, over against them all the soul sets its faith in the Justice of the God whom Christ revealed, and says, *There* I find a guarantee of the Hereafter.

But I listen further to the voice of faith as it speaks in the *heart*—the heart that has known God's love in Christ. If God came into human life in Jesus Christ for the sake of the souls of men, surely our souls must have some infinite value to God. Science is telling us to-day to look out on the vastness and majesty of star-strewn space. Realise your own insignificance. Look forward a few æons when the earth will be cold and dead; a few æons more, and the sun itself will be burnt out. In the immensity of this cosmic process—among these endless vicissitudes, who are you, that you should lay hold on eternity, and in the vanity of your heart say, "I shall live forever"?—a mere sand-speck blown about the deserts by the idle winds that mock. So the voice of materialism says. And it is a voice that impresses as it chills. But over against it this great

act of God speaks, and hushes the proud vaunt of scientific materialism into silence. Insignificant the world may be in the abyss of space, but the feet of the Son of God once stood on its soil for the sake of the souls of men. God has honoured this little sand-speck and made it sacred and great, by reason of the Divine presence in the Man Jesus. The universe may be vast, but it can be nothing to the vastness of the heart of such a God.

"Whither goest thou, O soul of mine, across the bourne?" "I know not, save only that it cannot be outside God, the Oversoul."

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

We have often been told that the greatest argument for immortality is the Resurrection of our Lord. But for some of us it is still more comforting to base our hope of immortality upon the Cross of Calvary. It is there, in that spectacle of love unutterable, that we find the clouds that veil the Unseen torn aside; and through the rift a light; and in the light

a face; and in the eyes a tenderness that neither mind nor heart can fathom. It is there we become sure that the one supreme longing of the Divine Heart is for human love. Can we think of God as watching with indifferent eyes the passing of the souls He loves into nothingness at death? "If," as it has been nobly and convincingly put, "if those who have served Him most faithfully, known Him most truly, and realised the fellowship of His Spirit most closely, pass away, might we not say, after the logic of our affections, that God — even God — must suffer perpetual bereavement, and bury the unfulfilled promise of His creation in our graves? And so the long procession of our humanity would seem no better than a funeral train, where the love of the Eternal is forever cut short by our mortal years, and the response for which He was preparing us lies silent and still. . . . In man there has come into being an object of the Divine Love. Does God call him into existence, train, discipline, judge, support, guide, inspire, and form him for communion with Himself, and then—sever the ties He has himself established, forgo His own work,

and continually begin anew the process which a cooling earth will end?" No, the further one plunges into the depths of the redeeming Love—that Love which is the very heart-beat of the Universe—the more does one become persuaded that death can be but a mere incident, which we, doubtless, cannot see beyond, but which can make no difference to the Almighty Love of God. To argue otherwise would be to proclaim the last defeat of the Divine Mercy; and to predict for the end of all creation only a lonely God weeping in the dark! It cannot be. The words of an old English poet about the souls of men must be true:

"If they should die then God Himself would die."

Yet when all that is said, the unsatisfied *mind* comes in, and facing the conscience and the heart says, "Still you have left that 'whither' very dim and vague." The hankering cry of the mind out of life's incompleteness and ignorance is the dying cry of Goethe's colossal intellect: "More light, more light!" Or perhaps it comes only in a whisper, like that of the Scottish philosopher

Sir William Hamilton, when, as his end drew near, his friends asked him the state of his mind. This was his answer, breathed with failing breath: "Intense expectation!" Man is the great adventurer on this planet, and dying is his last and greatest adventure. Age after age he has climbed the lofty mountain-side of speculation, and crossed vast continents of knowledge, seeking, seeking for the last secret of the Universe. And the more he has known, the deeper has grown his sense of ignorance, the more vehement his dissatisfaction. He feels he has put off in his tiny boat only a little way from the shore out on to the ocean of the world's mystery. Nay, he feels as Sir Isaac Newton felt, that he has been but a child on the shore gathering a few lovely shells. What is the reason for this strange contradiction in life—on the one hand the soul's mighty striving towards the Infinite, and on the other this veil of mystery and death which God has drawn around our humanity?

We have appealed to the faith of the conscience, and to the faith of the heart. We make our last appeal to the faith of the *intellect*. We believe that God's hiding of the Unseen

from us is part of His eternal Plan. He does not grant us complete knowledge just because He wants our souls to grow. With an anxious Father's hand he has drawn around the soul this veil of mystery and death, in order to make it yearn and long and aspire. In that very condition of ignorance we find a hint of immortality. In the conviction that there is more to read lies a warrant of continuance. For the Divine Mind, who knows all the syllables of the cosmic lesson-book, is the Father-Teacher, and will complete the education of His children.

A pagan poet once fancied that our lives here on earth were but the dreams of spirits asleep in heaven. When these wake up from their sleep in heaven, we die. What if, in a nobler sense, death be not a sleep but the great awakening? What if this life, great though it be, is only a dreamful sleep compared with the life that awaits the soul when it awakes in God's nearer presence? We haste, and fret, and fume, and storm through life, restless, restless, ever seeking, seeking. In this at least our earthly life is like a dream: it never satisfies the soul's immortal cravings. The longest life still

leaves the soul expectant. All too soon the sunset comes with wistful splendours. Then the darkness falls, and we, earth's children, close our tired eyes.

> "And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
> Of yet another morning breaks,
> And like the hand which ends a dream,
> Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
> Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
> Then—?—"

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness."

IX

The Soul's Heavenly Tabernacle

"How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"—1 Cor. xv. 35.

"There is a spiritual body."—1 Cor. xv. 44.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 Cor. v. 1.

When the religious imagination passes out beyond Death it embarks on a perilous adventure. And Emerson's advice that we ought not to "pick locks" in doors that seem divinely closed against our human finitude, is a sound one.

We have followed the fortunes of the soul right up to the shadowy portal that spans the end of its earthly pathway, and on the strength of the soul's present experience of a loving God we have claimed for it a continued existence beyond that door, which opens once for each man, and permits of no return. Yet we

who remain in the body stand before that fast-closed door, and our hearts are still full of unanswered questions. The one that confronts us here is the one that pressed on the mind of St. Paul as soon as he had stated the ground of his belief in immortality—"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?'"

As soon as we have uttered it, a prior question arises. Have we any right to ask such a question? Is this an attempt to pick the lock of one of the rooms which the Heavenly Father has forbidden to His children? Is it the unhealthy offspring of a prying curiosity which is doomed to disappointment?

No, we do not think it is wrong to ask the question; nor yet to try answer it, even if the only answer we can give must be in terms of our own poor earthly experiences, which at best can be but a shadow and symbol of the glory that eye hath not seen nor ear heard. For let it be said at once that, if we are compelled to split up God's universe into two utterly separate worlds, if between heaven and earth there yawns an unbridgeable abyss, then nothing at all of heaven's glory could ever have been

revealed to men; and before the closed portals of eternity it would be our duty to lay our fingers on our lips and be dumb. But do you think it at all likely that that is part of God's creation-plan? Do you want the beauty and wonder of this natural world to be dissolved and lost for ever from the spiritual world? Do you think it likely that God's heaven will be robbed of Nature's glory? Are you content to imagine the Hereafter as a place where soul will hold intercourse with soul, with nothing to take the place of the winsomeness and dignity of the human form, the warm hand clasp of the flesh, the beat of the heart, or the love-light of the eye? Do you think it unlikely that these are the symbols, the earthly counterpart of some radiant heavenly form? We do not believe that "earth is a desert drear"—the land of the soul's exile—and heaven "far, far away." We believe that heaven lies close about our finitude; that earth is the outer court, or perhaps a room, in the Father's house of many mansions. We believe that when the Kingdom for which God longs and labours shall have come upon the earth, Nature herself will be redeemed from her travail;

that all the doors and windows of the unseen world will be flung wide open, and the earth enclosed and transfigured in its glory.

If, then, it seems irrational to divide God's universe into two utterly distinct and diverse worlds, surely it cannot be a false instinct which asks about the soul's heavenly body. We have no experience of finite spirits existing apart from a body of some kind. And "this dependence of the spiritual on a vehicle for its manifestation," as Sir Oliver Lodge suggests, "is not likely to be a purely temporary condition; it is probably a sign or sample of something that has an eternal truth."

We do not find the question which we ask here, in the pages of the Old Testament. It took a long, long time for the dim hope of a life beyond death to emerge into a full-orbed faith. It was only in Jesus of Nazareth that the hope of immortality became one of the world's sublimest moral certainties. For it was He who showed mankind that the eternal Being has a Father's loving heart; that the human soul has a worth which is vaster than all the treasure of the material world; that the one supreme longing of the Father's heart

is for the friendship of human souls; and that God is not the God of the dead but of the living; He cannot let His friends die. But whenever you pass beyond the days of Christ's flesh into the life of the early Church, throbbing with the new light and joy which He brought, you find men so convinced of eternal life that they are free to ask this secondary question, With what body do the dead emerge into the life of glory? It is a distinctly Christian question. And we cannot be wrong to let the Christ-freed and Christ-enlightened imagination wander, even if it be but a few uncertain steps, in this region of speculation, as yet so dimly realised. Let us put ourselves in the company of St. Paul for a little, and make him our guide.

St. Paul's answer to this question is a threefold answer. He first calls our attention to a significant fact of observation. Then he suggests a theory of his own. And last of all he draws a wonderful and beautiful analogy.

What then is his observed fact of Nature? He tells us to use our eyes and look abroad over the world. You will discover there endless varieties of living things, and each one of them

according to the degree of perfection which it possesses has its own fitting and appropriate body. And they are all different from one another. What an amazing universe it is! What an endless wealth, what a profusion of forms the Creator has brought into being! Think of the bulbous, indescribable, living monstrosities which the harvest of the sea yields. Think of the endless variety and wealth of plant and animal life. Even among the stars of heaven there is no uniformity. But one star differeth from another in glory. It is as if the Creator, drawing on the infinite resources of His power and wisdom, has gone on fashioning new and ever newer forms in the sheer exuberance of creative joy. That is the fact of nature of which St. Paul reminds us. And he leaves us to draw our own conclusions. If the universe, as we know it, contains such an endless wealth of bodily forms of all degrees of glory, why should we think that the resources of Omnipotence are exhausted by the things we see? Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God could create an immortal body for an immortal soul? From the observed facts of this outward majestic creation,

St. Paul makes his appeal to the Omnipotence of the Creator. And so may we.

Now let us take the second point in his answer. If you study the language of St. Paul's letters carefully you will find that he has a theory that the soul dwells here and now in a double body—a body within a body. When he speaks of our earthly tent-house he seems to suggest sometimes that here on earth the material house or shell is striving to be sheathed by the spiritual tent of the soul, or to be interwoven with it. He speaks of the yearning to be under cover of the heavenly habitation, "since I am sure that once so covered I shall not be 'naked' at the hour of death." "We sigh heavily within this tent of ours, not to be divested (of it) but to be under cover (of the other heavenly habitation), to have the mortal element absorbed by life." That is the language of religious imagination trying to express something which that great mind instinctively felt to be true.

We must all be by this time familiar with the theory that not a particle of the tissue of which our bodies are composed at this moment was present in the body seven years ago. Our

bodies are constantly absorbing and building into themselves fresh material to take the place of the exhausted tissue which is gradually being shed. You look up at a gas jet burning, or at a candle flame. It seems always the same flame possessing a constant shape, unity, individuality, yet that chemical activity which is going on there is being perpetually refreshed by a constant stream of gas molecules. Every second or so the material composition of that steady flame is entirely changed. Just so, though much more slowly, do our material bodies change. What then is it in our bodies that abides through all the material flux? Is it not that cluster or system of forces working harmoniously together to a common end which we have called "life"? Death means a cessation of the operation of those forces through the earthly house of this tabernacle. It is only the perishing envelope which we lay in the grave. That is not the body which shares in the resurrection.

Without confusing the picture by adding further considerations, let us pass at once, in the third place, to St. Paul's very suggestive analogy from nature. Remember it is only a

dim foreshadowing of a great truth—a truth the force of which we may feel, even though we cannot find language adequate to express it. Why, says St. Paul, digging and sowing in your own garden, you may find a hint as to the body of the resurrection. The seeds which are grown by you are not the same seeds which you cast into the ground. These have for the most part perished and mingled with the soil. Only the little germ of life which lay wrapped up in the seed—*it* has not perished. It has gone on labouring, in concert with the mighty forces which play around it, building and constructing for itself out of soil and air and sunshine and the dissolving tissues of the sown seed, a new body, or bodies, in which may be housed the precious spark of life again.

Has the analogy lost its freshness and value for our modern day? Surely it is still worth our while to apply our minds with all earnestness to this great symbol of the soul's life, struck out by one of the profoundest intellects the world has ever seen. And let us see to it first, that we are not harbouring in our minds a superficial notion which would render this parable of the sown seed grotesque. It is

not when our dead bodies are cast into the ground—it is not then, that the soul's work of constructing for itself a resurrection body begins. We do not cast dead seeds into the ground. It is only the last stage of the sown seed's decay that can be compared to our dead bodies. The germ of our soul's life begins its activities soon after the hour of our birth. That is the moment of which the Apostle speaks when he says "it is sown a natural body"; not death, but birth. Just as we sow seeds in the soil, so God sows human souls, not into graves, but into this scene of time, with every fresh birth that takes place among mankind.

But note this other suggestive aspect of the parable. It is only when the seed is cast into the ground that the double process of decay and rebirth or resurrection begins. So with regard to human life, science tells us that the process of dying begins at birth. For a time the vital forces are able to rebuild the waste and more, yet very early they begin slowly but surely to die down. Well, the apostle's point here is that all the time this natural dying is going on, the soul is not dying. On the contrary it is

labouring and striving to build up for itself a new spiritual body. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed but clothed upon." That is to say, all the time that the merely natural and material casket of the body is passing down to decay, the soul is groaning, not in a struggle to maintain its powers against this decay, and not in any longing to be freed at last from any bodily encumbrance, but to be clothed upon—to build up for itself out of the moral and spiritual forces that play around and within it here, a new body that shall be itself in some sense spiritual.

Now let me ask you to glance along the course of this our human life, and see if we can discover any gleams and hints that this is true. You remember the beautiful conception of the American poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes. He had been looking at a cross-section of one of those lovely, spiral sea-shells—the Pearly Nautilus. He noticed how this shell consisted of a series of chambers or compartments ever enlarging as he followed them outwards along the spiral. He recalled the fact that these chambers had been successively dwelt in

by the little shell-fish at different stages of its growing life.

"Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last found home, and knew the old
no more."

And the story of that chambered nautilus spoke its divine message to the poet's soul :—

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at last art free
Leaving thine outgrown shell, by life's unresting sea!"

Can we trace such stages in human life, as it passes from youth to old age? I think we can. Let me roughly try to indicate one or two. You see an infant lying asleep, its little lips moving now and then. It is already a perfect organism, responding only to the natural instincts, the animal cravings for nutriment. But about the soul-germ encased in that little body we can only say that it is little more

than an unrealised possibility. The body has hardly yet been made a chamber of the waking soul.

Then comes the stage of the awakening. The first place where the feeble, spiritual flame begins to glow through the globe of flesh is in the eyes. We watch the first dull, undiscerning, vacant look of those little orbs, so unused to the light of day, begin to be displaced by the radiance of intelligence, the glory of attention. So great is the contrast that we almost fancy we can see the soul.

Then begins the long and happy period in which the soul dwells in the chamber of the senses. Here it is all engrossed in the wonder of the natural world. It does not assume control; it surrenders itself to the thrall of things, passively watching, receiving, imitating. We might say it is living in the chamber of the joy of life, for the dominant emotion is, How good to be alive! The bloom which we see on the face of nascent and exuberant youth is the first curtain of the tent of the soul, the spiritual body.

It is in the midst of this period that the soul begins to build a new chamber for itself—the

chamber of imagination. Who has not observed from a study of the great poets' faces, how the soul, constructing its world of beauty in imagination, has actually moulded the poet's features in lines which are the symbols of the ethereal wonders he beholds?

Then by-and-by the soul begins to pass out of that chamber in which it is swayed by the surge of emotion and fancy. And in its full-grown manhood it builds for itself, through the body, what we might call the chamber of the pride of life. It is the time when, in the healthy soul, intellect and will reach their full maturity. The soul is now upon the throne of life, and dominates all the movements of the body. Noble ideas and resolves now guide passion and sense in ordered obedience. The lines of the face lose their softness, and become set in firm determination; the curve of the lips becomes expressive of the master motive, the poise of the brow speaks thought. Recall to your mind pictures of any of the world's greatest, for it is in these outstanding instances that we get the clearest hints of the spiritual garment with which the soul is seeking to invest itself. Think of the face of statesman,

warrior, thinker, or prince of commerce; do you not discover, in these features, signs of the soul's power to fashion a spiritual body for itself, which interpenetrates the fleshly mask?

Then in the evening of life comes the most wonderful stage of all, when the soul passes out into a more majestic chamber still—the chamber of the sanctity of character. Think on the saintliest soul you have ever known. Is there any beauty on earth to compare with the beauty of holiness on a saint's face? Have you ever watched and wondered at the strange contradiction that is there, beneath the crown of silver hair—that delicate freshness and childlike bloom that glows through all the decrepitude of the decaying flesh? Does it not seem as if there were gleaming

> "Through all this fleshly dress
> Bright shoots of everlastingness"?

Yes, the soul that has been true to itself seems only to grow young as the casket of the flesh decays. The powers of the *soul* do not fail with the ebbing strength of the body.

"The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows."

The only significance that old age has for the man of faith is that the fleshly instruments, through which it was able to express itself in life, are losing their capacity to respond to the impulses of the soul. But because the strings of the harp are getting frayed, the rapture of the musician within has not ceased to flow.

Nay, we have hints that these raptures are already beginning to express themselves through a spiritual form, which the soul has been building for herself in this earthly life. We will venture, indeed, to say that we have hints of a stage beyond this stage of ripened saintliness. Have you ever seen a saint at prayer, or in any moment of ecstatic worship? Surely the light that radiates from the countenance is a light that is not of earth. Do you remember how, once, three privileged disciples beheld their beloved Master on a lofty mountain side, rapt in prayer? And the faith and love, the insight and the dauntless courage, that welled up from the depths of His holy soul, wrought a change so marvellous on His outward form that they prostrated themselves in trembling adoration. Peter never forgot the sight; his oft-repeated recollections

of the scene made a deep impression on the early Church; long years after, they named the place where it happened, "the holy mountain." Was Christ's transfigured body not a hint of the resurrection body—a manifestation of the tent, the spiritual tabernacle, which the soul has been weaving for itself through the casket of the flesh?

Think finally of the resurrection appearances of Christ. We do not pretend to know how it was that the little stricken company, prostrate with grief beneath the shadow of the dreadful tragedy, came to realise that their Lord was there; whether it was through a body woven out of light—for they said they saw Him; whether it was also interfused with golden harmonies of sound—for they said He spoke to them; whether there mingled in His holy fabric a fragrance as of myrrh and cassia and aloes—for they said He breathed on them. But the very existence of the Christian Church is our witness to the fact that somehow they came into contact with their Risen Lord.

Contact with the Risen Lord! That is the great spiritual experience by which every human soul is helped to build its spiritual

body—to rise with Christ, and hide its life with Christ—in God. Never could the sin-stained soul build for itself that "temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," without the aid of the Master Builder, Christ. But, with His help, even the vilest may have his vile body changed into the likeness of His; the broken chords in our life's lute be made to vibrate again at the touch of the Master Player's hand.

When we surrender our will to His, then we, "reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same likeness, even from glory to glory."—"And it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He re-appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

X

The Soul's Work Hereafter

"They rest not day nor night."—Rev. iv. 8.
"His servants shall serve Him."—Rev. xxii. 3.
"I will make thee ruler over many things."
Matt. xxv. 21.

Probably there is no subject in the whole range of religious thought, in which it is so necessary for us to be continually correcting the symbolism of sentiment and imagination by the sober and realistic interpretations of reason, as in the subject of heaven. Sentiment has often wept over Mrs. Hemans' famous song—

> "Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy,
> Ear hath not heard its sweet songs of joy,
> Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,
> Sorrow and death cannot enter there."

There are, in particular, two thoughts about heaven, which we are prone to dwell upon, to the exclusion of every other inspired vision which has been bequeathed to us in the sacred

Scriptures. We are too fond of thinking of the after-life as a life of everlasting rest, and a life of endless adoration and praise. "There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God," says the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews; and among all the splendid visions of the book of Revelation, the vision that clings is the picture of the great multitude whom no man can number, with golden harps, forever chanting *Holy*, *holy*, *holy*, round the Throne.

But we must here reflect how, through all the Scripture, inspired insight has been compelled to speak of heaven in the language of paradox and contradiction. Heaven, we are often told, is a place where sorrow and sighing are done away; yet we are also reminded that

> "There is no place where earth's sorrows
> Are more felt than up in heaven."

It is a place where God the Father sits on His throne of glory,

> "By prostrate spirits day and night
> Incessantly adored."

And yet the great deep of His heart is filled with yearning for His prodigal children—nay, He is still on the earth seeking for them with

tears of anguish. It is the place where Christ is exalted to the right hand of God, with power; and yet He is still the Lamb slain—He still makes broken-hearted intercession before the throne. It is a place where there is no night and no temple; and yet there, also, men are to serve Him day and night in His temple. It is a place where the redeemed rest from their labours; yet they rest not day nor night; but His servants serve Him; and some of them, martyr-souls, are still crying out in pain, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Surely it ought not to be necessary to say that, whatever else heaven may be or may not be, it is not a place where toil is laid aside to join in an eternal rhapsody of praise. And yet, because that view of heaven has bulked so largely in the minds of past generations of believers, because heaven has been so much represented as a reward for faithful service here, a reward which has been painted too often in the rainbow tints of a kind of sanctified epicureanism, scepticism has often hurled the reproach at religion, that it is nothing but a glorified selfishness; and that other-worldliness—the practice of dwelling too much on the

life hereafter, to the disparagement and detriment of this life—has only resulted in producing flabby souls; hindered and hampered the growth of a genuine manliness of character. This latter, they tell us, is the proper business of mankind; and we ought resolutely to put out of our minds all hankering thoughts and longings after a problematic heaven.

But it is time that religious men and women were getting over the shyness of other-worldliness, that has fallen on our modern day. The very mark of a Christian, according to the evangelist John, is that "he knows whither he is going." For when heaven is rightly conceived "there is nothing," it has been finely said, "so morally transforming as the practice of our own presence in glory." Heaven is just the continuation, the expansion and transfiguration of this our earthly life. Life is a preparation for a nobler service. Death is the enlargement of life; the opening of the way to new opportunities of worship and duty. Heaven is round about us now, only meantime our eyes are holden.

Let us pursue the thought for a little way. There are two characteristics of heaven which

God, through Christ, has made us sure of; there is no sin, and no death, in heaven. Consider how these two things relate themselves to human life. What is all our earthly morality but just a striving towards the shining ideal of perfect goodness, the urge and summons of the conscience to have done with sin? And what is the twin sister of moral endeavour in this scene of time? Is it not the yearning for more life and fuller, the longing for victory over death and the fear of death? And it is just this that our religion brings to us. When the love of God, through Christ, redeems us, when the Divine forgiveness comes home to a broken and contrite heart, what is the great peace which falls upon the soul but just the dawning of heaven's purity, the beginning of the end of sin—yea, and the beginning of eternal life, Christ within, the hope of glory? Here and now it is granted to the human soul to stand in the outer courts of heaven; here and now we catch deep glimpses of its inner glory. Death is not the setting out on a long journey towards a far-off joy; it is but the anointing of our blind eyes with clay; it is but the rending of the veil of finitude—the enlarging

of the soul's vision, the coming into the nearer presence of the unseen God that, around us and within us here, guides all through life's night of finitude. If it is wrong to split up God's universe into two contrasted worlds, and to say that the spiritual world is a world altogether divorced from the world of nature, it is equally wrong to say that the soul's life in heaven can have no relation to our earthly activities. God has tasks for us, high and holy ministries to fulfil for Him hereafter. Surely it is not immoral that we should seek to do our duties here in the light of our eternal destiny. There is no real sting in the sceptic's sneer against the Christian's heaven. It is only "he that has this hope in him," who has the true motive to "purify himself even as He is pure."

Yet another inference may be drawn from the thought that heaven lies very near to earth. Not only is the prospect of some great task for God hereafter of the highest value as an inspiration for all our earthly striving, but if heaven lies just beyond the veil of sense, if we are surrounded now by a great cloud of witnesses—for we may use that phrase of the

unseen as well as of the past—ought it not to be of the greatest help to us in all our striving to become truer men and women, to remember that the dear and holy dead are near? Our stern and arid Puritanism, fearful of the errors into which such a doctrine has tempted human frailty, has swung to the opposite extreme, set heaven far away, and robbed us of its present help and comfort. But we feel to-day that there is deep and uplifting truth in these simple lines:

"You lean upon His bosom, and I yearn
To kiss but the trailed hem and gather hope.
You know the whole, and I have all to learn;
You know the summit, I strain up the slope
That rises steep and stern.

The baseness that of old I hid from you,
I would not now: you understand the rest.
Seeing the whole, you will not misconstrue;
Seeing me fail, you know that still the best
Is what I long to do."

The thought is an incentive to moral endeavour. The life of the soul in heaven is just a continuance of the holiest and the best we have known on earth, surrounded there as here by the same social helpfulness, the same friendship, the same love. Heaven is a great

upward-stretching ladder of moral aspiration on which souls, God's messengers, move about their tasks between the earth, His footstool, and the Throne.

One of the favourite ways which the religious imagination has of describing heaven is to call it the place where God dwells. Our Lord often expressed that aspect of the truth: "The Lord of heaven and earth," was, "Our Father who art in heaven." But we must not rest content with this one half of the truth. It was Jesus also who said of the man who loves Him and keeps His words, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world"

sang Pippa. But if all that is meant by God being in heaven is that He is the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, throned in a glory far removed from the affairs of earth, then it would be truer to say that God is *not* in His heaven; that because He is everywhere else but in heaven, all is well with the world. God is King and Ruler of the universe, but not in the sense in which we conceive of earthly

kingship. God is King, because God is love; and love is the power that moves the world and is more and more to sway mankind. But love is that which loses itself utterly in service for that to which it has given life and being. The secret of the kingdom of heaven which Christ revealed is that the greatest is he that serveth. God is the supreme Ruler of the world, because He is the great Servant of the world. He stoops to do the drudgery work of the universe, making Himself humbler than the least of His creatures. The noblest picture that was ever conceived by prophetic pen of God's concern in human history is the picture of the suffering Servant of Jehovah. And the only perfect instance of such Divine activity among men was in the lowly life of self-forgetting love that passed from Bethlehem to Calvary. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord. It cannot be that the saints in heaven dwell in everlasting, calm repose. "His servants shall serve Him" there; and the great ones in the kingdom of heaven are those who fulfil the hard and lowly duties. All human values are reversed in heaven; those who were reckoned last on earth,

according to the standards of human pride, are the first in heaven.

What then of the inspired picture which makes heaven a place of eternal rest and endless worship? Almost the only glimpses we get in the sacred writings of souls at work in heaven are visions of vast multitudes prostrate in endless adoration and praise. Yet the instinct so to describe heaven is a true and divinely prompted instinct. For heaven is precisely the place where all work, all the labour and striving of earth, is transmuted into worship. If we understood them aright, work and worship would be seen to be so closely related as to be, not two things, but one. It is so on the earthly scale. Even those human enterprises and activities which seem to us to be entirely earthly, are all of them built upon a stupendous act of faith. Every factory is, in the last resort, a believing prayer—of trust and confidence in the unfailing constancy of the great laws of nature, those impulses of the Divine Will by which our world is maintained in being. If men were haunted by the suspicion that the force of gravitation might relax even for a single instant, if they feared that heat might

one day refuse to be transformed into movement, or electricity into mechanical force, all human enterprise would be paralysed. There is not a single thing we do in life, that is not at bottom a prayer of dependence upon the unfailing faithfulness of the Divine Will. And when in public or in private we bow to render unto God the homage of adoring hearts, we are simply seeking to set our human wills in line with the higher spiritual laws of that same Divine Will. Here on earth we cry, out of our brokenness and sinfulness, the prayer once taught us by lips Divine, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy will be done on earth"; and whenever in God's word the veil of heaven is drawn aside for us, we listen to the souls of the redeemed breathing the same prayer, only transfigured and perfected, "Holy, holy, holy be Thy Name." When death unseals our blinded eyes at last, when we have learned more perfectly to understand how the great beams of light and heat, how the orbits of the planets as they swing around their central suns, how night and day, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, are but the expressions of that holy Will of God that does "preserve

the stars from wrong," we too shall hasten to put our wills completely in line with the Divine Will; and every impulse and emotion, every thought and deed of ours will be an utterance of the soul, crying "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Heaven is the place of eternal rest and endless worship, because the only true rest is perfect obedience to the Will of God, and the only pure worship is complete surrender to that same good and acceptable and perfect Will. The souls of the redeemed in heaven rest not day nor night as they go streaming along the outpoured impulses of the Divine Will, carrying out His high commands.

But has our Divine Master given us no glimpses of the soul's work in heaven? He once said that the saints of the resurrection should be as the angels in heaven. And once, with tenderest hand, He lifted a fold of the veil, and showed us the angels rejoicing over earth's penitent sinners turning back to God, rejoicing as did the sons of God when the world was made. Earth with its precious freight of humanity, and every world in all the starry heavens besides, where souls have been

created—these are heaven's crowning interest, these are God's and the holy angels' supreme concern. An intolerable anguish once gripped the heart of Him who came to seek and to save the lost, when He saw the swiftly ripening human harvest, and Himself the solitary reaper clothed in the limitations and frailties of flesh and blood. Can He have forgotten His passion for souls, now that the resources of heaven are at His command, and the spirits are His messengers? The souls of the redeemed who have fallen asleep in Christ, now move in the unseen world at every impulse of His holy heart and will. And every hope that visits us, every comfort that has cheered our hearts, every tear of penitence, every thought of holiness and every new resolve, come to us now from the tender spirit of the living Christ, borne to us—may we not be permitted to think?—by some fond heart who loved us once on earth, and who now knows no other joy save only to carry out the impulses of the Master's Will. Did Christ not once say to a disciple, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"? In one of His parables we see the angels carrying

Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. Surely these angel spirits who ministered to Him on earth, still ascend and descend for Him in His exaltation. The ladder of the dream of Bethel has never been withdrawn. "Every new-comer to the planet," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "however helpless and strange he be, finds friends awaiting him, devoted and self-sacrificing friends, eager to care for and protect his infancy and to train him in the ways of this curious world. It is typical of what goes on throughout conscious existence; the guidance which we exert and to which we are subject now is but a phase of something running through the Universe. And when the time comes for us to quit this sphere and enter some larger field of action, I doubt not that we shall find there also that kindness and help and patience and love, without which no existence would be tolerable." For many of us are slow scholars, needing more than the schooling that earth has given us. And part of the meaning of the great word about the many resting-places in the Father's house has always seemed to me to be that there are lower rooms in heaven's glory, where God's greater servants are ever engaged in training and

moulding uncompleted souls, lives prematurely cut short upon the earth, or only won for Christ in later years, or souls that have made poor progress in the spiritual way.

"Can there be work for all in heaven?" you ask; "variety of work suited to the capacity of each? And what will be the nature of my task?" You listen to the astronomer telling us of the sights he sees through his telescope—those nebular masses slowly being moulded into new constellations, new worlds. Perhaps the conception of some modern thinkers is true; these processes are being guided by hosts of heavenly spirits. Who would not long to serve God in those stupendous and unending tasks of His? Our own old world is still travailing in creation-throes; and whenever men have tried to explain how it can be that evolution should always be an upward movement, they have stammered and stumbled into the language of religion. *Must* they be utterly wrong? Why should not God's messengers be the hosts of souls who have emerged into the larger life and liberty of the Hereafter—helpers in the birth-pangs and growth-pains of Creation? So long as earth with its travail and the human

race with its sighing and struggling exist, so long will there be sorrow and compassion and out-going influences of helpfulness in heaven. Nay, if the deepest reality of heaven is the spirit of pure, self-forgetting sacrifice, will anguish ever be driven from the courts of heaven so long as anywhere there are souls in agony? How, if the Cross should prove to be the symbol and type of all heaven's activity? And the delight and joy of all the heavenly inmates should be to give themselves for others? And —heavenly mystery!—joy at last be one with sacrifice?

Our life here is our probation for our heavenly service. To long for heaven is not selfish; it is to long to join the company of God's celestial workers. But we fear we may never be worthy to become helpers of God. Jesus has not left us without some insight on that question too. It is not brilliance, not genius or learning, not social or material power and influence on earth that determine our place in the councils and activities of heaven; but only faithfulness. Our task will be something adapted to the special talents and capacities which our work here has trained and

developed in us; but its significance will be according to the measure of our faithfulness in the earthly vocation. Not that it is to be the same task, but something kindred and on the scale of the enlarged freedom of the life hereafter. It is so, the New Testament suggests, with Christ Himself. In His earthly probation He was the Carpenter, the Builder. He sometimes conceived of His heavenly task in the language of the builder. Standing in the Temple Courts in the last days of His earthly career, He spoke of the passing of that great shrine, and of there rising in its place an unseen heavenly temple made without hands, and of Himself as the Builder. Long before, at Cæsarea Philippi, when He gave His new name to Simon, He said "On this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of death shall not prevail against it." The souls of believers are the living stones in this Divine Temple. It is a spiritual Temple, a Temple of endless activity. Every stone has its niche, and its purpose to fulfil in the mystic pile. And in this heavenly Builder,—"in the Lord, all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a heavenly temple, an habitation of God in the

Spirit." It is He who assigns us our places. It is the voice of the Lord of life that will greet us, when death has shut the door of our earthly finitude behind us: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; be thou ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Our assurance as to our heavenly work lies in that clearest word about the after-life that ever fell from the lips of the Heavenly Builder.

XI

Lost Souls

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."—GAL. vi. 8.

"It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."—MATT. xviii. 14.

Can souls be eternally lost to God? That is the melancholy question which now urges itself upon our thoughts. And we should be unfaithful to the subject we have been studying, if we wilfully thrust it aside.

And there are three things we must keep steadily in view, if we are to reach any just appreciation of the subject. The first is the revealed character of God. Secondly, we must keep in view the known facts of this our earthly life. And thirdly, there is our comparative ignorance of the Unseen. We have got to take a firmer grasp of the infinite mercy of God. Yet we must beware lest this should degenerate into a pure sentimentalism that would prevent

us from looking at the truth of life with sincere and open eyes. And in the end of the day, when we have spoken our last word, we must bow our heads in reverent agnosticism, confessing that there remain many things that we do not know.

Let us begin by striking at the roots of an ancient prejudice. The human mind when brought face to face with this problem of "the lost," has long been obsessed by the stubborn notion that it has to do with the impotence or with the severity of God. The whole problem is a problem of the will. If souls are eternally lost, does that necessarily mean that God's sovereign Will has somehow failed? There is a great deal of confused thinking in our every-day conceptions of the omnipotence of God. We rashly define it as the power to accomplish any imaginable thing. That is really meaningless. God must set limits to His own Omnipotence if the world is to be, not a nightmare, but an ordered reality. God cannot make time run backwards, He cannot alter the nature of space, or make a circle into a square. He cannot make two and two ever to become five. And it is just as impossible for God to

reverse moral values, as it is for Him to reverse those natural relations. A friend who had been on the top of the Matterhorn once said that when he stood there gazing on the stupendous scene, the thought came to him that there are some things which it is just possible for God to accomplish. There is truth in the fancy. Whether those mighty mountain masses come near the limits of God's power in nature or not, forgiveness at any rate, it seems to us, is the moral fact which only at an unspeakable cost it has been possible for the holy God to accomplish. God cannot sin. He cannot capriciously assume a character the complete reverse of what He is. Nor can He ever invade, by a mere act of will, a human soul, arrest the power of the individual's will, or force His own will upon it, without changing that soul's identity. "One of the deepest mysteries in the whole tragedy of life," says Dr. Kelman, "is the refusal of Christ to coerce the wills of men, and His sorrowful contemplation of the fact that there are those who will not come unto Him and have life." God has gone to the uttermost limits that His own moral nature, and the moral plan on which the world is built,

will permit of—He has poured Himself out in one tremendous sacrifice of love, in order to persuade men to be reconciled to Him. And *if* there be souls who are cast as rubbish to the void at last—if, in spite of love's uttermost, the human will still possesses the fearful power of determining its own destiny for evil, let us be very sure of this, that it is not God that is to blame. Remember, we are not yet foreclosing the question. We are still saying "*if* there are such." But we are asking you here at the outset to rid your minds of the impious—nay the blasphemous suggestion—that the possibility of eternal reprobation is a stain on the character of God. "It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these . . should perish."

Does that preliminary view still leave lines of harshness and severity in the character of God? Look at the word "lost" for a moment. We usually think of it—do we not?—as a word of shuddering import—a grim and dreadful word. I will dare to say, on the contrary, that it is one of the most poignantly tender, one of the most love-laden words in the whole of the Scriptures. It is pre-eminently a New

Testament word. It is one of the words which Jesus Christ has cast into the garden of human thought, nevermore to die out of it. I think it is only twice used in the Old Testament, of human souls, and both times in the same pathetic figure which Jesus Christ has rescued from the twilight world of ancient Judaism, and set as one of the most brightly glowing gems in the treasury of the Gospel—"lost sheep." What a tender word that is, compared with the phrase which our hard, cold, worldly emotions, so dimly lit with the Divine light, employ to describe our perishing brothers and sisters — "lapsed masses," as if they were so many heaps of broken débris, waste matter, refuse. The love of God in the heart of Christ calls them "lost sheep," "lost sons and daughters." It is one of those thrilling, moving, human words, by which Christ—almost unconsciously, one might say—lays bare the heart of the Eternal Father to the gaze of man.

But we may carry the picture further than that. There is a sense in which nothing at all in the wide universe can be lost to God. Nothing real can ever pass beyond the vision

of His all-seeing eye. Whatever hell means, even that condition must be wrapped about with the omniscient Presence of God. You remember the parable of the lost coin. Is not one of the great features of the parable just this—that the coin was lost *within the house?* Every corner of God's universe is within God's House of many mansions. What then does this word "lost" mean to God? It does not mean out of God's sight, but out of God's heart, estranged, self-estranged from His love. In some human home there may be a son—or a daughter—who has crossed a father's or a mother's will. Day after day he goes his headstrong, wayward way, intractable, disobedient; sitting down to meals, sleeping under the paternal roof, but sulking, sullen, silent. Not in the far country at all: in the home, yet not of it. He is lost—lost to all that makes home home—lost to the love which is the soul of the home. Even so are we, when we go our sinful way within this wonderful room of God's house, this fair world He has made for us. Still under our Father's eye, but lost—lost to His love. Would the mere compulsion of a Father's will, forced

violently upon a rebellious heart, undo our lostness. No, the only power in heaven or on earth that can undo that dark condition of the heart is love—love that hopeth and endureth, on, and on, and on. But what if we refuse to see that love—so blind our eyes with sin that we cannot see that love? Oh, love may bleed to death in sacrifice; that is the only way that love can act. But if it sought to win an entrance to a hardened heart by any other way, it would cease to be love; it would undo itself. And if for any soul the Divine love ceased to be—that would mean that the rebel soul had passed out into night, and chaos, and the empty void.

What then is hell? The old view was that hell is a region outside the soul, and beyond this earthly scene, where the lost wander forever, outcasts from the heart of God, where the gnawing worm of conscience dieth not, where weary lusts and passions run forever riot through the impotent soul, whipping, scourging, scarifying it, like salted fire. But we would say this deliberately, that hell, whatever it be, cannot be outside God's universe. For outside the Divine Reality there is nothing—

nothing. And let us say this also, that we have absolutely no regrets that the old, mechanical, and grossly materialistic conception of hell is practically dead to-day; that the terror of some fiery torment has faded out of human thought. We have no regrets, because the result will be that by-and-by the real spiritual truth which lies embedded in that word "hell" will get a chance to assert itself. The hell we have got to fear is not a problematical place of torment in a future life; the hell we have got to fear is the hell we make for ourselves inside our own souls. Hell is a spiritual state. Hell may be here, now. Think of the remorse of Judas. That was a soul already in hell. That man hanged himself in a last desperate attempt to get out of hell.

Well but, you say, did not Christ predict a place of outer darkness, a Gehenna of fire, and a worm that dieth not? And did He not also give it a future reference, a state beyond death? We shall answer these two questions quite shortly. Christ did try to convince us of some great and dreadful spiritual reality. He tried to do it by His usual method—in the form of pictures. He never meant us to take

the picture for the truth. Then, secondly, He did give those symbolic pictures a future reference. What it means is simply this. A man may be in hell here, and not know it. After death—such is the Master's suggestion—he cannot escape knowing it. Hell, in other words, is not so much a creation of God's, as of man's will in a morally planned world. Show me an utterly depraved human heart, and I will say, That man is in hell now, here. "But it doesn't seem to cost him much suffering," you object. Wait, I reply, he does not know he is in hell—not yet. Hell is the soul gazing on itself at last in all its hideousness. And death means the dropping of the veil of sense which here distracts the vision of the soul from itself, and from the reality of the Unseen. Beyond death a sinful soul stands face to face with itself at last beneath the full blaze of the infinite Holiness and the infinite Love. That will be hell. "Hell," says Robertson of Brighton, "is the infinite terror of the soul."

What about the duration of such a state? We do not rightly know how to apply the notions of time to eternity. But we feel that one terrific

moment of that awful vision would be eternity for us.

But now that brings us face to face with another solemn question. Does not such a conception force upon us the necessity of conceiving a bitter, unhealed sorrow in the heart of the Eternal Love in the hereafter? Two attempts have been made to solve the dilemma. One is what is familiarly known as the "larger hope"—that sometime, perhaps after long æons in the future life, during which the sinful soul "drees the bitter weird" of its own actions, it will be saved at last, and the harmony of the Divine Love be complete. And the other theory is that the rebellious soul, grown at last impervious to love, or having by its own actions robbed itself of the power of responding to love, drifts away into outer darkness, is extinguished in the night of nothingness, is broken up and dissipated through the universe, ceases to be a soul, perishes in the second death. There is ultimately not much difference between these two views. We have ventured to maintain in these discussions, that this earthly life has been given us in order that we may fashion ourselves into completed

souls. If that is a true reading of life, must we not honestly and sincerely face the dreadful possibility that a soul may unmake itself by missing the mastery of its own destiny? "The soul in its highest sense," says Henry Drummond, "is a vast capacity for God . . . but without God, it shrinks and shrivels until every vestige of the Divine is gone, and God's image is left without God's spirit. One cannot call what is left a soul; it is a shrunken useless organ, a capacity sentenced to death by disuse, which droops as a withered hand by the side, and cumbers nature like a rotten branch." That is the view of a scientist who understood, as few of his day understood, the height and depth and breadth of God's eternal love. Is there so very much difference between that view and the view which represents God building again with infinite pain and travail, out of the brokenness and ruins of a reprobate soul, a new soul that will reach out after moral perfection at last? Could we say it was the *same* soul that once made within itself a hell? We believe with all our heart that no spark of goodness born in time will ever be utterly lost from the great plan of eternity,

when God hath made the pile complete. But it would be well for us, in our imperfection and finitude, not to let our sentiment far outstrip our moral experience. Surely it is right for us to take our stand by Christ's revelation of the Father's love. We find no difficulty in accepting Christ's words when He said there were things pertaining to eternity of which, in His limited experience in human flesh, He was ignorant. But if you are to persuade us that He was wrong in speaking with such severity about moral values and destinies—if, in other words, you are to persuade us that there was either fleck or flaw upon His own purity and love—if, precisely in the very things in which He was a revelation of the Father, a definite message from the unseen, and God's Divine Son—if, in these, there was still so much imperfection that He spoke harshly and rashly, out of His ignorance of the future, then you have struck a chill arrow of death into the joy and assurance of the Gospel. We must be left free to say that it was all God's holiness and all God's love that were there in Him. Our sinful hearts demand that we be allowed to kneel, yes, to kneel in worship before that holiness and

that love. We accept Him for what He claimed to be—our Saviour and our Judge.

Therefore there must be truth in the symbols with which Christ spoke of that dread remorse of conscience, which is another name for hell. There must be a profound and solemn truth in His words when He spoke of souls perishing. But the love of God the Father, as He revealed it to us, is a love whose height goes towering up to the utmost limits of His holiness, a love whose depth goes down beneath death and hell, a love whose breadth spreads out over all humanity, throughout all lands, throughout all worlds, throughout all time—on, and on, and on; a love which is to be All-in-all some day. Here is room for the human heart to bow in reverent agnosticism, and to worship with trembling hope and penitential tears.

The Divine love will abide on the throne from everlasting to everlasting. But what if God's love in its triumph should be God's love still on the Cross—God's love with a red wound of sorrow still in its heart? In the words which Ibsen, at the close of one of his most splendid dramas, put into the lips of the apostate Emperor Julian: "What if that at Golgotha,

near Jerusalem, was but a wayside matter, a thing done, so to speak, in passing, in a leisure hour? What if He goes on and on, and suffers and dies and conquers again and again from world to world?"

The all-important fact is that it was done here in time. And we dare not risk our soul's immortal destiny to a grand Perhaps. Are we so sure the will to repent and turn will still be ours, out there beyond the shadows? "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

XII

The Re-union of Souls Hereafter

"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."
LUKE xxiii. 43.
"So shall we be ever with the Lord."—1 THESS. iv. 15-17.
"They without us (shall) not be made perfect."
HEB. xi. 40.
"He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."
2 TIM. i. 12.

THE question whether souls that have been separated by death are reunited in a future state is already settled when we have decided, so far as it can be decided, the question of individual immortality. If we have known the love of God here in this life so intimately and so deeply, as to be certain that God's heart would break if death were stronger than His love and ended the friendship between Him and us for ever; if from our experience of the Heavenly Father we are convinced that He

could never be content to live on in Eternity, preserving only the memory of us—the unfinished and broken dream of what our life was meant to be; if, in short, we may be sure that Death can make no difference to the Almighty Love—then it follows, simply, naturally, and most surely, that there shall be recognition and reunion of lost loves and friendships hereafter.

For, does not your own personal immortality mean that you are going somehow to recognise yourself to be the same individual there as here? And does not that mean the memory (or some transcendent equivalent for memory) of the experiences of earth that were most dear and precious to you? And when you think it over, is there any earthly experience that has a value in any way approaching the value of the dear ties of love and friendship? Nay, apart from your intercourse with other beings, human and Divine, you would never have known yourself to be an individual. Your personal life in the hereafter will depend on the same loving intercourse. If your soul were to wake up beyond death amid a society of absolute strangers, you could not know yourself

to be the same. The life of the dear and holy dead, and ours too, will be incomplete, until the love they left behind on earth be given back to them. "They without us shall not be made perfect."

But let us turn the subject round and look at it from the other side. Surely the sacred human claim for future recognition of friends may be used to strengthen the faith in a life beyond the grave. Let me put it to you: Is it not true that well-nigh the whole of the human yearning for immortality lies in the hope of a re-union of broken friendships? Those who know Dante Gabriel Rossetti's marvellously beautiful poem, *The Blessed Damosel*, will realise how completely that is so in the mind of the poet. You remember his story. A maiden fair and pure, who has been dead ten years "as mortals measure time," —though it scarcely seemed a day to her, for the first wonder on waking to the glories of heaven had not yet "died from that still look of hers"—is looking out across "the gold bar of heaven," and down towards earth, and wondering when her lover will come through the gate of death and join her. She is planning holy

and beautiful plans for that blessed day. And far away down upon the earth *he* stands, looking up, and—in the awful *desiderium* of his heart—it seems a hundred years since she died. The poem is one of the most poignant expressions of longing in the English language. It is almost too moving a task to read that maiden's long soliloquy in heaven, and to watch, at the end, the chill cloud of doubt which creeps over the child-like confidence of her dream for one soul-shattering moment of unutterable yearning, which surely thrills and throbs through all the distance between high heaven and earth, as

> ". . . she cast her arms along
> The golden barriers,
> And laid her face between her hands,
> And wept. (I heard her tears.)"

"I heard her tears." It is the broken heart still on the earth that speaks the words. Nay, the whole poem is just the lover's own yearning, projected in fancy into the soul of his lost love in heaven. If there can be such anguish on earth—ah, why should we say "if"? for the tale is as common as death is common—and if such longing is permitted in heaven (and that

is guaranteed by God's noblest gift to mortals, love); and if there is love, Divine, everlasting, almighty, in the Father's heart—can we doubt the issue? If human lives are forever conserved within the care of God, shall not—must not—the love of God preserve forever as a sacred trust our human loves as well?

Let us give another turn to the thought. Suppose it could be convincingly demonstrated to you that the hope of re-union was a beautiful but sad delusion, would you—*would* you—greatly care whether there were any Hereafter for you? Only think for a moment how, in the case of nearly all the great souls of our day, these two thoughts—immortality and re-union—were one and the same thing. It is said of the famous Dr. Jowett of Oxford, that, when asked what were his favourite lines of poetry, he paused diffidently for a moment, then in embarrassed haste spoke Tennyson's piercing lines:

> "O, that 'twere possible,
> After long grief and pain,
> To find the arms of my true love
> Round me once again!

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee :
Ah, Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What, and where they be."

Was it not re-union that that great man of faith, Robert Browning, looked forward to, with deepest longing, after death ? The sorrow and pain of desire, that breathes through all his poetry after his wife's death, breaks once into the unfaltering assurance of those lines :—

" O thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest."

To this hope Carlyle clung through all his days. The profoundly touching lines of Lockhart, the biographer of Scott, were often on his lips. Andrew Lang used to quote them with deep feeling, and they show the yearning intensity of hope with which he regarded the future :

" But 'tis an old belief
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief,
Dear friends shall meet once more.

. . . . . .

That creed I fain would keep,
That hope I'll not forgo—
Eternal be the sleep
Unless to waken so ! "

Does the sentiment not call up a responsive echo in your breast? Between an immortality of lonely separation, and utter extinction, there is little to choose. The former has no attraction for the human heart at its best. Most of us would rather cease to be. But see how that very fact strengthens the case for immortality. Does it not give the *quietus* to that old calumny, that the desire for immortality is nothing but the lingering remnant of a selfish animal instinct, a tenacious holding on to life for its own sake? The truth is that we desire to live forever because we love—because we are ready to sink our thought of self in concern for the welfare of others. We desire to live because we want to taste again the joy of self-forgetting sacrifice, the sweetness of engaging in the lowliest ministry for the beloved, a servitude which, to every loving heart, is its own reward. And surely, if that is so, no one can call the desire for immortality selfish. It is the very heart and kernel of all true morality. Can a good God thwart a desire so high and holy?

I know that to state it thus is to express the Christian hope very imperfectly. The deepest desire of the true Christian must ever be for

closer fellowship with God the Father, and Jesus Christ, the soul's Redeemer—to go on serving forever Him who is our dearest Friend. And revelation corroborates our hope in this: "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." The yearning of redemption-love is, in some unimaginably glorious way, to be satisfied. The heroic word to the thief on the Cross is: "To-day shalt thou be *with Me* in Paradise." But is not the very meaning of our redemption that we have been saved from our selfishness? God saves us one by one, that we may love and serve our fellows. How can we show our love to Christ save by lowly service for those whom He loves? And if there were no opportunities for such deeds of love and kindness in heaven, would it be heaven at all? Should we be so very anxious to see God (we speak with reverence), if He were a God so weak and so devoid of love that He could only bring us into His presence bereft for ever of the love of those we loved and lost on earth? Can heaven's great harmonies of love shut out a parent's, a husband's, a wife's, a brother's, a sister's, a lover's claim? No, no, a thousand times, no! The immortality

of the soul and the re-union of friends are sacred hopes which stand or fall together. And in the one case as in the other we make our last appeal to the Love of God. Heaven will not be the land of pure delight that we long for, unless it mean an end of tears, that death—and all other forms of separation—cause to mortals. If God is going to dry our eyes, it must be in the rapture of meetings again. Yes, once the dark river is crossed, "a fair face will be fain": eternal be the sleep, unless we waken so.

Perplexities remain, you say. Yes, but it is that same strong love of God that gives the answer to all the special problems about the hope of re-union. These difficulties gather round a single fact. And it is this. Though death breaks our fellowships here, yet life goes on for us, and new interests and experiences come to occupy our minds. It must be the same with our departed friends. Their souls must cónstantly be passing on from glory to glory amid the wonder of heaven. How then about the future meeting? Shall we be able to bridge the gulf made by the separateness of our experience?

Suppose you loved a soul on earth, whose purity of heart and nobility of mind convinced you that he was capable of rising to far greater heights of responsibility and spiritual dignity than you felt *you* could ever attain. How can the perfect stature of his manhood have any contact with your lowliness, in heaven? This was the great perplexity which troubled Tennyson when he thought of his dead friend Hallam. He wonders if, beyond death, he shall ever be able to

> ". . . leap the grades of life and light
> And flash at once, my friend, to thee."

And the poet's heart finds two answers to his cry. One is, that while death fills us who are left behind in ignorance with only a longing for renewal of the broken intercourse, it may not do so for the dead. They in their larger life may still in some degree enter into the thoughts of our heart, and linger near us in love. Though we cannot directly enter into their heavenly experience, they may, nevertheless, continue in some measure to share our experience on earth. And that will perhaps be the link which ensures recognition hereafter. But Tennyson's second

answer to the fear that inequality of station in heaven may keep friends separate is the one that satisfies. It is the answer of love. Love knows no caste distinctions. There is no spiritual snobbery in heaven. The noblest soul there is the one that longs for the lowliest service. The King of heaven washes the feet of His humblest friends. If God, the All-great, can intimately care for *you*, then in the radiance of God's love, may you not lift your voice to say of *your* dead friend ?

> " I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
> The soul of Shakespeare love thee more."

And—

> " Love's too precious to be lost,
> A single grain shall not be spilt."

Perhaps one of the intensest aspects of this problem of re-union is seen in the yearning of parents over a little dead child. Does the child grow up in heaven ? Shall we know the grown man for the little babe we saw him last to be ? And will all the joy of parenthood in watching and fostering that growth be forever forgone ? It is the same answer that suffices for these wistful questions too. For the

resources of love—of the Eternal Father's love, and of our human loves made wise by watching and by sorrow—if they are more than a match for Death, will be more than a match for Time with its changes as well. If the clinging ways of child-love abide in the souls of the tiny dead, will God have no pity when, amid the golden ways of heaven, they long to go back home? Surely God will allow their spirits often to draw near to the hearts on earth that are sick to clasp them once again, to draw near and share their love and sorrow and joy. And Christ, the Shepherd of the lambs, will be the mediator between them and those who had them in their keeping for a little while. All other forms of communication with the dead are shadows, empty, wrapped in a thousand uncertainties, compared with this. And if haply they know us, though we cannot pierce beyond our finitude to know them, should we add more sorrow to their love by our bitter, hopeless tears? May not the poet's picture of a mother's dream be true, when she saw, one night, a procession of happy little ones with lighted lamps, passing along the ways of heaven?

"Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
O, it did not burn!
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turned about,
'Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn.'"

And as to the question of growing up—of course there will be growth in heaven. But let us not tangle that thought with fancies of our human frailty. There is no such thing as growing old in heaven. Youth and old age are facts which belong only to this scene of time. Growth, there, is growth in grace of character. We grow, as the Apostle tells us, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," who died a young man in His prime. If then the Lord sees to it that the heavenly experience of your child, sad heart, does not exclude a knowledge of your earthly way, you shall recognise your own by the love-light of his smile of recognition when you meet; and when he sits down to tell you all the story since the day he left you, it will not be a mere recital of a dead past; you will live it all again, and your parenthood will be fulfilled.

But the darkest of all the questions that gather about the subject of re-union is the question that arises from the fact of separation and estrangement caused by sin. Some pious mother or wife dies, let us suppose, and carries with her into the life of God an awful sadness for some wayward wanderer she loved on earth. If he perishes in his sin, is her sorrow going to be an eternal sorrow? This much we can say at once. So long as sin remains separation remains. That much is very sure. —"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Peril? The Sword? No, neither death nor life, . . nor any other created thing." But one thing is left out of that catalogue—*sin*. Sin *does* separate us from Christ. And if it can separate us from so great a love, it will most surely from our weaker human love.

But is that the final word?—What is it that the pure heart loves in an erring friend? His sinfulness? No, but some goodness or possibility of goodness that may still remain—something real or fancied about the black sheep that makes him lovable still. Suppose now that

in the clear light of eternity all that fancied lovableness is seen to be but the mournful delusion of love's blindness; that what still drew the soul out in love towards the wanderer was only an outward appearance, a mask covering complete corruption. Will the love still remain? Can love love on with nothing to love? Human love can make mistakes, and misplaced love can die and ought to die. But is there no compensation? The wound of misplaced earthly passion can be healed in a nobler love. So may the bruised and broken love of wife or mother read love's true message in the deep kind eyes of Christ.

"Oh, but it is my own, my own I want," you say. Will you not find all that you loved—yes, the very love that loved you—in the love of Christ? Is His love not great enough to gather into itself all the treasures of human love? "Love's too precious to be lost: A single grain shall not be spilt."

And suppose there was something in that sinful heart, some spark of goodness, some yearning after better things, something to justify the love that was lavished on it. Will the pure heart that comes weeping to heaven's

gate be met there only with cold, severe, reproving looks? Will God crush and repel that anguish? Nay, but her agony will be verily a throb in the sorrow of God's heart. And if there is still hope left beyond the veil, will not Christ Himself join with all heaven's broken-hearted inmates, passing even to the depths of hell—to spirits in prison—that Pity might plead in agony afresh with sin? All heaven was in the Cross on Calvary; is there no Cross in heaven? In one stupendous vision of the after-life, we read that in the midst of the throne was "a Lamb as it had been slain." And in the light of this we may believe that the law that governs all the work of Christ and His redeemed in heaven is none other than the Cross—Sacrifice.

Yes, only when every longing of true love is satisfied, or else by the light of the Divine Love soothed away into Eternal Peace—only then will the harmony of heaven's love be complete; only "so shall we be ever with the Lord": only so each soul's blessedness will be fulfilled. In that hope you may end your sorrow, believing heart. In that hope you may say:

" Then what if the sea be deep, be deep,
And what if the sea be wide ?
Some day I shall float in my own fair boat,
And sail to the other side.

And what if the land be far, be far,
And what if the sea be wide ?
Some day I shall sail with a favouring gale
To a port on the other side.

I can see the sun on its airy towers,
And a white hand beckon from over the sea ;
I can smell the breath of the rosy bowers
Where Somebody waits for me."

XIII

Do the Souls of the Dead Ever Return?

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." I Thess. v. 21.

"Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God . . . Every spirit that confesseth Jesus as the Christ incarnate, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is the Christ incarnate is not of God."—I John iv. 1-3.

Once or twice the topics dealt with in these chapters have approached the confines of a subject which engrosses multitudes of men and women to-day—spiritism, with its confident assertion that the souls of the dead do sometimes return to hold converse with friends on earth. And though it formed no part of the original series of topics, some general survey of the subject may be offered as an epilogue. The mass of testimony, good, bad, and indifferent, flows in a constant stream from the press.

Much of the literature is a dreary wilderness, to whose mazy pathways the clues are uncertain and dim. A final verdict on the phenomena is not yet possible. The spiritist theory based on these happenings can neither be corroborated with assurance nor categorically denied. But since the standpoint of these chapters has been that of the light which God's Word sheds on the story of the soul, it may not be a vain question to ask, before we close, if Christian faith and Christian revelation provide any guidance as to our practical attitude of mind towards these happenings and the inferences drawn therefrom.

Worldly-mindedness, which sometimes masquerades under the name of commonsense, may maintain an attitude of sceptical indifference. Christianity cannot afford to do so. F. W. H. Myers has claimed that spiritism is "the preamble to all religions," and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle boldly affirms that it is "The New Revelation." The religion which enshrines at its centre the supreme event of the Resurrection, with the accompanying return and manifestations of Jesus, cannot ignore the claim. It was the age-long human

conviction the broken-hearted king was voicing, when he said of his little dead son, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me"; but the faith which holds as an article of its creed "the communion of saints," cannot lightly affirm that the world of the dead still remains "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." It is true that the Puritanism of the sixteenth century, reacting from the extravagances of Rome, dethroned this article of the creed, and laboured to build impassable barriers between the living and the dead. But Nemesis was inevitable. And spiritism is that Nemesis. The reason for its wide-spread ramifications to-day is plain. Supervening upon an age when a far-flung bankruptcy of faith had taken refuge in lifeless convention, the Great War, with its terrible toll of young life, has raised to the pitch of stridency the demand for some tangible assurance of a life beyond the grave. The quest has its roots in the sacred soil of sorrow. "Pain," said Arthur Henry Hallam, "is the deepest thing in our nature, and union through pain has always seemed more holy than any other." We can understand the union of the

living through a common sorrow. Has the human heart any right to endeavour to disannul the sorrow by seeking union with the dead? Has the great multitude that no man can number recognised that right, and have they organised themselves to assist the living from the Other Side, in the storming of the marches of the ghostly kingdom? Have the portals of the spirit-world been forced? These questions call for grave consideration.

What then are the phenomena? And what is the theory concerning the gateway to the spirit-world, which these strange happenings are alleged to prove?

The phenomena are the aberrations of the human soul beyond the ordinary level of waking consciousness — auto-suggestion, hypnotism, telepathy, trance-manifestations, clairvoyance, clairaudience, automatic script, and kindred experiences of an abnormal or supernormal, though not necessarily on that account supernatural type. Two clear and certain facts have to be reckoned with here, the emergence into waking or trance consciousness of experiences which are not due to contact with the outer material world through the senses; and the

power of one personal will to dominate and control another, sometimes across long distances, by way of the sub-conscious or subliminal, or—as it is sometimes called—the supra-liminal mind. And the main question ultimately resolves itself into this: what significance are we to attach to this extra-marginal region of the soul?

I

The phenomena themselves, however, call for certain preliminary observations. We are confronted at the outset with their elusive nature. They are unlike ordinary scientific facts. Freewill and the indeterminateness of consciousness are eliminated from the natural world with which science ordinarily deals. The facts of nature are always there, always open to experiment which can be safeguarded from practically every possibility of error. And to those experiments they always make the same reactions. Here, among these mental phenomena, we cannot measure, we cannot forecast, we can never exactly repeat. We are dependent upon observation, in a region, and under conditions, in which observation is beset with

difficulties; and we are dependent upon testimony which, in such matters, is notoriously untrustworthy.

Further, those phenomena are unlike the ordinary outer happenings of history. For though these cannot be recalled or repeated, they can be verified by the material and spiritual results which they leave behind them in human life. The spiritual influences of the prophet, the reformer, the founder of a religion, are realities which can be brought to the judgment bar of history. Their moral values can be estimated by the nature of the changes they have effected in human society. Whatever be the explanation of the Resurrection and Pentecost, the experiences which the early disciples then passed through have impressed themselves on the life of humanity in the profoundest and most far-reaching way. They have wrought transformations of such a kind as, in a real sense, to demonstrate, in a world built on a moral plan, the reality of the convictions of these first disciples. The phenomena of spiritism elude such a test. They have, indeed, produced a cult and a wide-spread organisation with a numerous membership. But spiritism is no

new thing in the world. The road to En-dor is an old, old road. "At no time known to us," says F. W. H. Myers, "whether before or since the Christian era, has the series of trance manifestations—of supposed communications with a supernal world—entirely ceased." The present phase of the movement has been with us for three quarters of a century. Yet no great movement towards a loftier morality, a nobler life, has as yet been witnessed as a result of it. Nor are there any signs of such a movement. The ethical tests of history cannot be appealed to, in corroboration of the alleged spirit-communications. On the contrary, while it may be no fault of the phenomena themselves, the history of the movement has been darkened and saddened by frequent instances of charlatanry and fraud.

Nevertheless it is one part, and perhaps the main part, of the spiritist case that demonstrably authentic messages have been received from the Other Side. It is with these alone that we need here concern ourselves. Cases of conscious fraud or of self-deception ought not to foreclose the enquiry for the unbiassed mind. Many a fair and holy thing lends itself too

easily to the arts of trickery and deception. And this is especially true of phenomena which lie beyond the threshold of ordinary experience. For "he who goes beyond the sphere of experience," says Kant, "is safe from being contradicted by experience." It is therefore with the great mass of supposed spirit-messages which we know, on other grounds, to be recorded in good faith that we have to reckon. And here we may set aside at once a pathetically large volume of such messages because of their worthlessness from the point of view of evidence. Many a sorrowing heart may have come away comforted from the séance, convinced that contact has been made with the dead friend. But the scientific investigator finds no guarantee in that against the possibility that it is a simple case of thought-transference from the sitter's mind to that of the medium—that the memories and hopes of the sitter have but stirred the latent beliefs in the medium's sub-conscious mind to make the longed-for response.

We come nearer the ground where the "messages" begin to wear the semblance of authenticity, when we turn to trance-scripts

or utterances which come spontaneously to some psychics, no one else being present at the time, yet utterances found afterwards to have a real connection with actual fact. Psychics often avow that there never was anything in their waking experience which could have given occasion to these ideas and pictures that have emerged into waking or trance consciousness out of the subliminal. But two difficulties stand in the way of accepting these as genuine evidence of spirit-communication. A number of the cases have been submitted to the test of psycho-analysis, and frequently it has been found that what the subject *bonâ fide* believed to have sprung originally and fontally from the subliminal had actually been experienced once in the subject's waking consciousness, and afterwards completely forgotten. It is evident, indeed, that much that we meet with in actual experience is absorbed inattentively, and registered in sub-conscious memory. The second difficulty is that in many other cases the possibility of telepathic thought-transference from the living still remains. For, wonderful as many of the recorded instances of veridical clairvoyance or telæsthesia are, and difficult

though it be to determine the limits of the phenomenon, telepathy is none the less a well-established fact. Even the so-called "book-tests," where the medium or psychic is directed for a message about a dead friend to words on a certain page in a certain book otherwise unknown in the medium's waking experience, are not beyond the telepathic hypothesis.[1]

It is where these and other cases become more complex that the supposed evidence begins to have an air of verisimilitude. In certain well-known instances, messages, trivial in themselves, yet intimately connected with some earthly experience of a dead friend, have come to sitters who were only cognisant of some of the details, and that, too, through a medium quite ignorant of the past history of either the enquirers or their friends. On careful investigation it was found, in one case, that these new details were once known to another party who had only a professional interest in the incident, and had all but forgotten it.

[1] It would almost seem as if, in some cases, the sub-conscious mind could become directly *en rapport* with the ideas of a book. Or there might be indirect thought-transference of the contents of a book through the mind of one who had read or was reading it.

Suppose we still accept the telepathic explanation here. We are obliged to postulate in addition an amazing series of coincidences—that the medium had picked out precisely that part of the illimitable ocean of the subliminal which constituted the subconscious mind of this disinterested party, who was not in the thought of any of the experimenters; that the medium had further picked out from that sub-conscious mind a series of recollections which corresponded to the recollections of the dead friend of the sitters; that, further, the memory of one of the sitters corresponded, but only in a few details, with those recollections; that in short, the medium had lighted upon facts exactly suited to answering the conscious purpose of those who had come for a sitting. It does seem scarcely credible, on the telepathic hypothesis alone. It does seem simpler to say that some other conscious directing mind, the mind of the dead friend, or some other spirit, has been controlling the use of this mind-stuff from the Other Side. Still the case is not absolutely proved. It is merely our ignorance as to the nature and extent of the telepathic powers of the mind that drives us to suggest this other solution.

We come finally to the most complex cases of all, the cases of "cross-correspondence" so-called. Here at last we seem to have a nearly perfect experiment, in which the possibility of fraud or unconscious cerebration on the part of the medium, or thought transference between persons alive on the earth, is all but excluded. The Society for Psychical Research has made exhaustive records of such cases. In the case of *The Ear of Dionysius*, *e.g.* (Proceedings, Part LXXIII., Vol. XXIX.), it certainly seems difficult to explain such an intricate maze, except on the assumption that two dead scholars, by propounding and working out an obscure problem in classical literature, through several more or less unlettered mediums, are seeking to proclaim to mortals their continued existence and identity on the farther side of death. But it is only in such complicated instances that the fact of spirit communication comes anything like near to proof. The task of demonstrating this is clearly one for scientific experts, not for the superstitious curiosity of unskilled minds. For in the long run the only real danger lies in ignorance.

It must be noted here, however, that many men of great scientific and philosophical attainment have devoted much attention to this subject. And in the opinion of not a few of them, the " fact " of intercourse with discarnate spirits has been proved. For many others, however, the case is still *sub judice*. Even the cross-correspondence cases are not accepted as decisive. This is as far as we have got regarding the authenticity, the genuineness and certainty of so-called messages from the Other Side.

But the proof of the supposed intercourse with the spirit-world depends not merely on the claim that certain experiments have eliminated the possibility of these messages being due to telepathic intercourse with the living, and that absolute certainty of spirit-communication has been reached. It rests further on the assumption that the supra-liminal does somehow possess channels of access with the spirit-world. And there is finally to be considered the value and good faith of the messages supposed to have been received. To each of these we must now give some consideration.

II

What is the true significance of the sub-conscious region of the soul? Is it an inland arm of the ocean of some World-soul in which all the spirit life of the unseen lives and moves and has its being? Does it possess gateways of access to the entire spirit-life of humanity, through which space is disannulled? Does it possess gateways in which the barriers of finitude are crossed, and the soul makes contact with a land of disembodied spirits? Are these our dead? And do they seek to renew their intercourse with the souls of those they loved on earth?

The use of the term "*supra*-liminal" implies the claim that the region of the human soul which lies beyond the threshold of waking consciousness includes a higher and holier stream of life and existence than that which comes within the cognisance of our everyday experience. Various factors have been adduced to prove this. The fact of hypnotic suggestion itself is urged as a proof that the supra-liminal is in contact with personal spiritual forces. For hypnotic control is the response of the

subliminal to another will. But the hypnotic trance is not to be regarded as an obliteration of the waking consciousness, as in sleep. It is rather a displacing of the focus of consciousness, which re-appears, functioning at other levels of consciousness, and there responding to suggestion made by a mind on earth. It is not yet proved that the trance ever puts the subject of it beyond the control of the living.

For the second argument to prove control by a higher region of spirit, namely that, in all cases of hypnotism, suggestions to evil are never obeyed, is not conclusive either. In short the great battle here lies between two opposing theories of the subliminal. Spiritists hold that it is continuous with, or at any rate has means of access to, the unseen world of spirit. Others—eminent psychologists among them—hold that the subliminal is a warehouse, not a factory; a reservoir, not a fountain; that it is fed from above the threshold, not from beneath. Its contents consist of memory-*residua* of past impressions, desires, volitions that have first been active in waking consciousness, and then been submerged in the unconscious part of the

mind. For there is no gulf between the conscious and the unconscious, but a continual interpenetration.

Does the fact of the refusal to respond to the hypnotic suggestion to evil disprove this ? Clearly it does not necessarily in the case of the good man. Experiences of the waking consciousness are, in his case, organised by moral principle. They retain that character when they sink into the sub-liminal. And from it they make the same re-action to evil suggestion. But what of the bad man ? No man is utterly devoid of conscience. And conscience is a product of race-, not of individual experience. It can be thwarted only by the active will in waking consciousness. Dead acts of evil probably lose some of their vitality when they sink into the subliminal. They become amenable to this older moral force, which, in the case of the bad man, is presumably more active there than in the waking consciousness. And it is surely a suggestive fact, tending to support this second view of the subliminal, that in psycho-therapy, or the healing of nervous ill-health by means of psycho-analysis and suggestion, the endeavour always is to discover,

hypnotically or otherwise, what are the discordant elements in the subliminal which are creating ill-health, and then to confront the waking mind with them, recalling them thus from the depths that they may be reasoned with, and set right or dissipated in active consciousness. Surely this successful principle of action pre-supposes that it was through the waking mind they entered the subliminal.

If a grotesque and inadequate figure may be pardoned, the whole sphere of the soul in its incarnate state may be likened to an earthenware vessel or carafe. On the spiritist view the waking consciousness only looks out through a transparent under-part—for the vessel is, so to speak, regarded as inverted—on the material world; and beneath that lies the subliminal with its access through the mouth of the vessel to the spirit-world. On the other view, the vessel is regarded as upright. It is the mouth of the vessel that represents waking consciousness, having unimpeded access to the spiritual world through and beyond the material. And there is no access, real or apparent, with the spirit-world *viâ* the subliminal. In the séance we may not only be

standing on the threshold of the Unseen, knocking at the wrong door, but there may be no door to knock at!

In order to correct part of the inadequacy of the figure, another may be suggested. It seems quite clear now that the contents of the subliminal are not merely the *residua* of the experiences of the waking life of the individual. As an Eastern thinker puts it, "the Unconscious is not only full of our individual habits, thoughts, eccentricities, feelings, impulses, etc., but is also replete with reminiscences which hark back to our pre-human days." There is a large element of race-memory in the subconscious region. Instinct, which has been called "inherited reason," may be built up out of these age-long strivings of dead generations. There is truth in the view, recently argued by W. B. Yeats, that there is a great world-memory passed on from generation to generation, and that we can get psychically into touch with knowledge running backward to the beginning of the world. All our mental images, our apparitions, he suggests, are found existing in the general vehicle of *Anima Mundi*, and mirrored in one particular vehicle. Thus

our separateness of individuality may be only appearance due to the physical conditions under which we live. The subliminal minds of men may merge ultimately into one primeval spirit-tree trunk, on the branches of which we, the individuals of the race, may grow as buds and twigs, as fruit and leaves. It may be along the branches of this multi-ramified spirit-entity that telepathic processes operate. The tree is fed from the waking consciousnesses of men; there is little ground for supposing that it has subliminal roots, or draws sustenance by underground intercourse with the spirit-world. Of course subliminal intercourse, though not necessary for its life, might still be possible that way. But that is just the question at issue.

Such a view of the subliminal is not without its suggestion of discarnate spirit-survival. This vast race-reservoir of consciousness, existing more or less independently of the body, suggests by analogy the possibility, though it does not demonstrate the fact, of survival. When the lamp is shattered, the electricity is not destroyed. When the body dies the consciousness that operated through it is

withdrawn into this reservoir carrying its experience with it. Moreover the fact that this universal subliminal mind tries persistently to express the idea of survival is suggestive. Even if it is only the expression of a desire or instinct, there is no other instinct for which the satisfaction organic to it does not exist.

III

A last question remains—the question of the value and good faith of the messages supposed to be received from the Other Side. Assuming that there is contact with the spirit-world by way of the subliminal, what sphere of the spirit-world is it that we make contact with? Must it not be some grade of life in the Unseen, corresponding to the level of consciousness which is said to have this access?

Have we any right to talk of contact with the *supra*-liminal by the way of trance and automatism? On the face of it, this displacement of the focus of consciousness does seem to be, not a rising above, but a sinking beneath, the level of waking experience. It does not predispose one to expect insights, lofty visions, profound

revelations of the Unseen. And when we turn to examine the records of the " messages " again, we find little to disturb that initial surmise. The demand is frequently made that messages from the Other Side, if they are to carry conviction to the listeners on earth, should be lofty, worthy, and holy, conveying some noble and sacred truth about the life beyond. And the objection has often been made that such " messages " as have come are so trivial, nonsensical, and fragmentary, as to be entirely unconvincing. Mr. Augustine Birrell has described them as attempts to demonstrate a " mere prolonged egoism, as if the one thing we wanted to be assured of is continued existence and an endless capacity to talk platitudes." Eastern sages looking on at our Western religion have said that we have discarded idolatry only to erect individuality into an idol. While this may be a verdict based on a false estimate of individuality, spiritism affords no small justification for the view. " A revelation of a life beyond the grave," Mr. Birrell continues, " ought surely, if it is to do any good in the world, to be more stupendous than that—something of really first-class

importance. Otherwise we are just as well without it."

It is only fair to say, however, that it would be something for this materially-minded age to have a demonstration by infallible proof of the "that" of a future life, even if the "what" remain an unknown quantity. If men were certain there was a future life, however problematic, questions long evaded would be forced on their attention once again. And we ought also to do justice to the constant reiterations in these scripts, of the extreme difficulty of getting messages through. The body is an instrument tuned only to express the life of the soul that is normally associated with it. To find another spirit of so nearly similar organisation that it can take possession of a body not its own in trance, and find utterance through it, must be a rare fortune. The psychics on earth are few. They have had their own life-histories: their subconscious minds must be loaded with a mass of memory-impressions which cannot but be stirred into activity by the intrusion of spirit-impulses from an alien source. "I want you to understand me, but I have so few chances to speak,"

so runs one fragment of a script delivered through a well-known medium, "—it's like waiting to take a ticket, and I am always pushed away from the pigeon-hole before I can influence *her* mind." Further we have to reckon with the fact that the friend on the Other Side from whom a message is sought, can on the showing of these scripts, very seldom use the medium directly, but is obliged to make use of "controls"—which may be only the medium's focus of attention functioning at a lower stratum of the mind, and assuming there a new personality. "Let it be remembered," says one psychic researcher, "that we have to do in this investigation with the operation of a mind which appears to dream, and to bring out of its treasures unexpected allusions, glimmerings at a central idea, which it apparently takes time and effort for the speaker to make clear, and then pass through an ill-made machine. It is something like writing a letter in the dark, which you hand to a sleepy postman, who will carry it through an unknown land, past ancient block-houses of prohibitive tariffs, and along unscaled passes, to a temporary and moveable address; and the responses are

brought by dictation to an illiterate scribe, who does not always know the meaning of what he writes." We are bound to make these allowances; and not impatiently to demand great and coherent utterances which shall be of the nature of revelation.

Yet all these avowed difficulties standing in the way of direct contact with the spirit-world, not only raise in our minds the doubt whether we were ever meant to storm the unseen world by escalade along this way. But they raise the further doubt whether, supposing we do get into contact with discarnate spirits, they really belong to some more perfect sphere of being than we possess here. If the probabilities are that in trance and automatic scripts we are watching the workings of inferior regions of the soul, does it not seem likely, assuming for the moment the spiritist hypothesis, that it may only be with some inferior outpost in the House of many mansions that we have to do? It may be that for a time the soul, when first disengaged from the body at death, finds itself inhabiting a dim region where it lies in part at the mercy of subjective illusion, and is easily influenced by the wills of other

beings, whether carnate or discarnate. In short we cannot assume the good faith of the life on the Other Side, which we seem to make contact with here. "In the vast asylums of the unseen," says A. E. Waite, "there is no question that, if there has been a universal survival of the souls of men, the basements, the cellars, and the dungeons of the house not made with hands must be crowded with beings whose capacities and dispositions would place them if possible a little lower than the shells and elementals of Jewish theosophists." We have no guarantee that it is our dead who speak with us, that our sorrow is not being exploited by fraud, or our longings by the trickery of some demonic intelligence.

The only real guarantee would be that the messages should be self-authenticating—divine truth shining by its own light. And when the spiritist claims, as kin with the revelation which he teaches, the mystic intuitions and visions of poet, prophet, and saint, we must reply that these are not won by way of the subliminal mind, not won by sinking down below the level of normal consciousness. Rather are they achievements of the mind at the

height of its powers; not gifts received in trance and sleep, but revelations vouchsafed to the soul as it rises on wings of reason, imagination, moral obedience, faith, and prayer, at the heights where it leaps out from the fetters of discursive thought to repose immediately in the heart and mind of God. It is only this region, the region invaded by the great geniuses of thought, and imagination, and spirit—the philosopher, the poet, the artist, the prophet, the mystic—which may with truth be called the supra-liminal. These spiritual torch-bearers follow the way of Divine law and do not pursue the false track of mental abnormality. The way of Divine law is the more difficult pathway, and it is shunned and evaded by the multitude, hot on the trail of some elusive short-cut. But those who follow this high path are the true mediums through whom God makes spiritual revelation to mankind. Theirs are the only messages that truly help the spirit of man—that pass the test of self-authenticating worth and power. It is the spirit of man in the flesh, manifesting through these alone, that wins clear access to the unseen mysteries of God.

IV

The result of our survey has been to disclose a region consisting of what Sir William Barrett calls "shifting quicksands." Credulity may be satisfied. Uncritical curiosity may be satisfied. But scientific inquiry is not yet satisfied, and the truly spiritual soul finds itself as far off from its goal of certitude as ever. What then ought to be the attitude of our Christian faith to this whole movement? In the first place, openmindedness. One of the characteristics of common-sense—which does not always coincide with sense—is a tendency to shyness towards the super-normal. It would seem as if it imagined God's intention to be, that the human soul should forever and only run on the rails of the commonplace, and that He created us without leaving to us any unexplored avenues for fresh development. The discovery of strange powers and capacities in the soul, savouring as they do of the uncanny, is to the commonsense mind something to be ashamed of and suppressed. But they must have some function to fulfil in human destiny. God makes nothing in vain. It is right that

the trained scientific expert should explore these avenues to discover their nature and significance, and determine, if he may, the truth towards which they lead. True religion must have truth as the goal of all its seekings ; to it no part of that infinite field can be alien land. But these psychic phenomena ought not to be exploited to gratify morbid curiosity or the craving for sensation. The open mind is not the mind eager for new excitement ; it is the patient mind that waits the light of skilled investigation. For faith is not superstitious craving, for which the Master has only stern denial and rebuke. "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And the cultivation of the sincere religious sense is not only the best cure for superstition, but also the best preparation for the receiving and evaluating of each new ray of truth that may come to it. It was to the morbid craving for sensation that the prophet spoke when he said, "When they say unto you, Seek unto familiar spirits and ghosts that cheep and mutter (then shall ye answer) Should not a people seek unto their God ? On behalf of

the living (should they seek) unto the dead? —For information, for a 'message'—truly thus will people clamour for whom no day breaketh." It was to true spiritual seekers that the Master said, "I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." And it is necessary to remember that the Comforter is come. And that true spirituality is not punctilio about a Divine Law that is regarded as forever fixed and closed, but an entire and trustful commitment of the soul to this Spirit, who was promised as our Guide to all the Truth. For often those who make the greatest claim to be experts in the life of the Spirit are the least willing to believe that God has yet much light to break from His Word, which speaks in Creation, in Revelation, and in the soul of man. There is no higher religious duty than that of listening for the Voice of God.

And there is a call not merely to open-mindedness but to spiritual judgment, in the Christian attitude to these psychic phenomena. God has not left us without a principle of

criticism whereby we can in some measure separate the chaff from the wheat. The criterion of truth is consistency and coherency. And any picture of the after life claiming to be a veritable message from the other side of death must, if it fails to answer this test, be set aside. Jesus, we are sometimes told, is known in the spirit-world, and acknowledged as the greatest of the great; but it is His life that is regarded as unique not His death. This is a pronouncement that has no meaning either in reason or in conscience. Christians have often made the mournful mistake of separating the death from the life of Jesus, and finding some magic efficacy in the mystery of the Cross and the Blood. But the error of this "new revelation" is the same error of abstraction, swung to the opposite extreme. God was in Christ, and Christ was on His Cross, in every labouring breath He drew, in every weary step He took, in every living word He spoke, in every loving deed He wrought. The only solution of life's terror and mystery to-day is the discovery that God was never anywhere else but on the Cross. The law of all the movements of the spirit-life is the law of

sacrifice; and any so-called message from the Other Side that contradicts this is but the mingling dross of earthly predilections. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. . . Every spirit that confesseth Jesus as the Christ incarnate is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is the Christ incarnate is not of God."

Finally the truly Christian soul will recognise that God has drawn around our earthly life the veil of finitude in order that by struggle and effort we might win our individuality. It is the very condition of faith—the impulse by which we rise towards God. There are no short-cuts to the unseen. Religion is communion with God issuing in a spiritual life marked by ethical values of the highest quality. The call to-day is not to the cult of the séance, but to the cult of God. "The true theme of religion," says Sir William Barrett, "is not the Future life but the Higher life. . . To know that the dead are still living is not to know Christ. To find comfort in ghosts is not to find the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." The dead are with Christ, and in Him they do

commune with us, though they may no longer be able to use the old bodily symbols of intimacy, or give us the old assurance of their presence. Yet through Christ we do speak to them, in every holy aspiration, in every deed done for their sake, and in their memory. And they speak to us, in every deepened note of assurance that enters our faith, in every unbidden and spontaneous impulse to goodness,—" sudden upliftings, touches, guidances,"—in every fuller insight into the pain of the world's sacrifice, in every tint that thrills us with a profounder emotion in the glory and beauty of sunsets and of flowers, and in every enlarged and finer appreciation of things unseen. Through Christ as our Divine Medium is the true " Communion of Saints."

" With God be the rest."

V

The point of view which has been worked out in the fore-going sections is given in the form of poetic allegory in the following verses, which appeared in *The Venturer*, January, 1921. They are here reprinted by the kind permission of the Editor.

Concerning the Soul

A POET RETURNS TO EARTH

1

"Make thine own choice," said God; and I have made it,
Earthward returning; though when first I woke
After Death's kiss, earth-memories had faded,
Earth-friends become a half-forgotten folk.

2

So, from some dizzy height, the climber gazes
Down on the kindly vestiges of man;
He cannot see the homely fire that blazes
Yellow and scarlet, where his day began.

3

Only he sees, like withered leaves, the châlets
Swirl into view where trailing mist-wreaths break,
Fade, and assemble in the dreaming valleys:
Yonder he slept; but now he is awake!

4

So did I wake; for, thrilling through the splendour,
Mounting like rose-red peaks, an urgent choir,
Ardent, compelling, magically tender,
Sang of the heights and sharpened my desire.

5

Prophets these were, and saints; their music blended
Close overhead—no more a muffled lay,
Since the Great Player's finger, swift extended,
Cast the *sordino* of the flesh away.

6

"Press on!" they sang: "Press upward! These are stages
Only, for breathing space, until you come,
Taking His unveiled face for your soul's wages,
At the dread hearth-fire of your Father's Home."

7

Then did my soul, like Herakles, unloosing,
Burn to make good the infinite ascent.—
Nay, but the fetters linked again, and bruising
Uplifted pinions, left me sick and spent.

8

Love still is fetter, ever linking, loosing;
Yearning to souls that yearn, or here, or there.
"Choose!" Yet how great the cost of such a choosing;
Bitter, uncertain, wrought in anguished prayer.

9

Not Death's concern, such strife be superseded—
Well the dark poet prophesied the same.
Hands, from beneath uplifted, softly pleaded;
Hands from above in passionate pleading came.

10

Which should I answer?—Yours, from earth uplifted?
Behind the obstinate veils of sense you stood;
Mistily round your hands the blue veils drifted,
Sundering you from naked certitude.

11

—Or theirs?—pale spirits, pleading no less gravely
From out God's hither side of mundane sleep,
Mourning the transient things they wore so bravely
While they were yet too ignorant to weep!

12

Poor shivering spirits! Theirs the sorest crying:
While they were naked, God was naked too;
I heard His Voice within their voices, sighing,
"Come and befriend us: we have need of you!"

13

How shall I tell it ? Fain, I heard their pleading ;
Eager and torn, I heard their fearful plain ;
Pitied and faltered—ah, how near acceding !—
Faltered and pitied . . . turned to you again.

14

Love that is holiest in the heights had called me ;
Still from beyond the Pass of Death it calls,
Pleading through that dread need which so appalled me.—
Still—still it haunts, and tortures, and appals.

15

Aye, but your voices from this cloud-wrapped hollow,
Fireside companions, yoke-fellows of yore,
Draw me with dear compulsion, and I follow.
Hearken !—You hear not ?—Have you barred the door ?

16

Did we not choose a trysting-place where mortal
Might meet immortal ?—I forget . . forget . .
Vaguely I grope, and linger at the portal.—
(Patience, my spirit ! They will listen yet.)

17

O hard renunciation ! Hard election—
Thus to prolong the path by which the soul
Flies to the breast of God, her last perfection !
Nathless His blessing tarries at the goal.

18

This much I learned from that angelic being
Which bore to me His verdict on my choice :
" ' Fleeing from heaven,' God said, ' he is not fleeing
Forth from my Love.' But tears were in His voice."

19

" Yea," said the angel, " the Divine devisal,
Long ere your coming, planned another task ;
Therefore God wept to make the strange revisal,
But weeping, blessed, and granted what you asked."

20

Here then I stand, the garment of His blessing
Chequered with sadness, broidered with His tears.
Could I but trace in these a God confessing
Mine own compassion, I'd forget my fears.

21

Never to know! Alas, God may be grieving
Over His child that shunned the heavenly Plan,
Following his wayward will, too lightly leaving
Tasks of a magnitude he could not scan.

22

Never to know! For there is none to tell me:
Lonely I wander, undiscerned, ignored.
Angels from their companionship expel me:
How could they smile on one who grieved their Lord?

23

Lonely the way I chose—none knows how lonely,—
Outcast alike of angels and of men!
Renegade there, and here a phantom, only
Able to whisper through a dreamer's pen.

24

Early and late my spirit strives to reach you,
Beating against the bars of Time and Space;
Aching with all the truths I fain would teach you,
Panting to find one recognising face.

25

Hardly one prisoned soul gives sign of seeing:
As I were glass your rapt eyes pierce me through;
Thoughts, thrills and fancies of your earthly being
Veil the celestial vagabond from view.

26

How should your mortal eyes scan unfleshed spirit?
How should your mortal ears receive my speech?
In this vast maze of symbols you inherit,
How should I place my sign within your reach?

27

Yet I did swear that I, to you returning,—
Found I a path,—would tell how fared the dead ;
Now down forbidden ways, to ease your yearning,
I press through many a goblin-haunted glade :

28

Hear me ; for in a frenzy of desiring,
Anguished I call, lest the pursuing hours
Hound me from hence, and, sight and speech expiring,
Leave me enisled in regions far from yours.

29

This is my message : false the path we follow,
Who seek the mystery of Life and Death,
As once we vowed, adown the dream-sown hollow
Of self ; or from the dim voice of a wraith.

30

My soul comes to you dazed, since I, forsaking
Heavenlier tasks, held to my earthly vow,
Following strange tracks, half-dreaming and half-waking,
Led by the dwarf who whispers to you now.

31

Hark you, a dwarf, with comic arms akimbo,
Careless and impish ! Ah, the piteous troll
Is the one tenant of this shadowy Limbo
Which can translate the language of my soul.

32

Translate, forsooth ! He cannot more than stutter,
Cackle grotesquely, keep our souls apart ;
And, spoke I straight to you, I could not utter
In earth-born speech the tidings of my heart.

33

For know, from hence, within your world of shadows
We mark your spirits prisoned in dark sleep ;
And, ere we reach you, we traverse the meadows
Of sleep likewise, and there bewildered creep.

34

Not as the dead who have transcended Reason
Not as the living, fair by Reason led ;
But on a bridge flung forth by subtle treason,
Huddle we now, the living with the dead ;—

35

Huddle we, shuddering : I see your faces
Stained with the marks of fruit Love long forbade ;
And through his sleep one dreamer, darkling, traces
This tear-dewed robe wherein my ghost is clad.

36

O hear me, ere these swaying arches vanish
Down through the maelstrom of affronted night :
None win to heavenly vision, who would banish
Reason's high stairway from the steeps of Light.

37

Only by patient mounting up that ladder
Whose steps of age-long wisdom are compact,—
Mounting, when grim fate turns thy sad heart sadder,
Mounting, when golden fancy lightens fact,

38

Mounting, until at last the tense-strung spirit,
Reaching the heights of heaven's high vault serene,
Doth, raptured, there her rightful home inherit,
There rest her gaze on mysteries unseen.

39

Vain thought, and blind—that, saving in the closing
Of sense, soul wins not access to the height ;
Rather the loss of sense foretells the losing
Of its interpretation and delight.

40

But, sense being cleansed, holier sight arises
Slowly and sure, until the single heart,
Soaring to God on wings of swift surprises,
Knows in perfection what it knew in part.

41

Yea, and thus striving, join we the immortals,
Thus only touch their spirits' inmost fire,
Whose torn, triumphant pinions stain His portals,
Even while they flutter to their last Desire.

42

Hearken! Yon eagle-soul, with broad wings brooding
Over the tomb of Plato, stirred the air
Once, into glittering streams of speech, full flooding
Fair silence into music yet more fair:

43

"While the wan shade of Herakles still lingers
Amid the strengthless shades, he fain would tell
Old feats and triumphs on his spectral fingers;
Fondly to boast of these contents him well.

44

"But Herakles set free outstrips the morning;
Forgetful now of lesser prize and goal,
Towards holier conflicts, higher perils turning,
Strains all the sinews of his warrior soul . . ."

45

Thus spoke Plotinus, while the dark terrestrial
Shadows still brooded round his mortal tent;
But on that pilgrim-brow there rayed celestial
Beams from the bright horizons where he went.

46

Cabined in mortal flesh, he yet consorted
With those free spirits, sharing in their strife;
Communed in God's heart with the great departed,
Thinking their thoughts until he lived their life.

47

And wouldst thou seek to find dear banished faces?
Thus, thus alone the vision may be thine.
Seek them no longer in the storm-tossed places
Of thy dark self, but in the face Divine.

48

Seek in that Face the fill of all thy seeing :
No richer crown, and no more glorious palm
Than here to win, on heights of timeless being,
Eternal conquest and eternal calm.

49

Here the great sea of silent contemplation
Thrills to the stroke of thy strong-swimming soul :
Here the soft music of thy meditation
Mingles with God's in one harmonious whole.

50

And, resting here, thou dost at last discover,
God had not lived if one of these had died
Whom thou didst hold on earth as friend or lover :
Here in His Voice they whisper at thy side.

51

Turn not away, beloved, I beseech you !
Hear me this once lest I must rise and go,
Never again through time or space to reach you,—
Ah, do I reach you now ?—To know ! . . to know

52

Darkness and silence,—save for that faint calling ;
Louder it grows, and clearer, like a song
Slowly through separating æons falling
Into the heart to which it doth belong.

53

Nay, not a song—a prayer, a swift beseeching,
A whispering breath, an overwhelming tide,
A heaven aflame !—then Mighty Hands outreaching,
Hands long evaded, pleadings long denied.

54

Wearied am I, and dazed with long resistance,
Baffled and worn ; and those dear bonds of yore,
Wherewith I bound to yours my soul's existence,
Break ;—yet I never loved their bondage more !

55

Once more to plead,—my God, let me but linger
One more brief hour with those I hold so dear!
Yea, blot my name out with relentless Finger
From Thy great Book,—so only they may hear! . .

56

Silence! Dread silence! O what sword is driven
Through thee, my soul, on this thy wayward road?
Alone! Alone! Alone! Outcast from Heaven
Am I? . . Ignored of men? . . Accursed of God?

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